ENGLISH STUDIES IN AFRICA

Volume 1 September, 1958 Number 2

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WITWATERSRAND UNIVERSITY PRESS
JOHANNESBURG

Price: FIVE SHILLINGS

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Subscriptions, at the rate of 10s. 0d. per annum are payable to:

The Witwatersrand University Press,
Milner Park,
Johannesburg.

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ROY CAMPBELL AS LYRICAL POET: SOME QUIETER ASPECTS

UYS KRIGE

IN this paper I propose to deal only with Campbell's lyrical poetry in the two volumes *Adamastor* and *Flowering Reeds*, and with the influence of the French poets on him.

Adamastor, perhaps his best single lyrical work, is a remarkable book of poetry to have been published by a young man of twenty-eight. The well known poems in the anthologies, *The Zulu Girl*, *The Zebras*, *The Serf*, *Horses on the Camargue*, *Rounding the Cape*, have long since been accepted as an intrinsic part of our literature, and I am confident that they will live as long as the English language is spoken in Africa.

I hesitate to use the word "great", since it is a word much misused in this age of ballyhoo and big sales talk, but I think that the poem, *Tristan da Cunha*, approaches greatness. During the past thirty years I must have read it hundreds of times; yet it has retained for me its fascination and beauty, and has remained a real "spell-binder". These are a few of its outstanding qualities: a forward-surging movement that never relaxes; a Shelley-like passion and "possessedness" that never flag; a sustained deep music like that of an organ; a visionary quality that has something awesome about it; a nobility of language and splendour of image that are rare in modern poetry; and an austerity of tone, diction and attitude that amply compensate for the touch of romantic self-pity in one or two minor passages of the poem. If ever Campbell wrote a truly inspired poem, this is it.

I want, however, to concentrate on a few aspects of *Adamastor* that have, to my knowledge, received little or no comment to date.

We all know the romantic, ebullient, exuberant, I almost said rip-roaring, Campbell of *The Flaming Terrapin* and much of his satirical work. But in *Adamastor* there is already another Campbell, a quieter, more subdued Campbell, who is striving after the classic values of simplicity, clarity, harmony, balance and objectivity in his poetry. And this is a Campbell we meet more and more in his later work, a Campbell whom the critics have sadly neglected.

In some respects Campbell's poetry was like his conversation. That is to say, often like a torrent or, rather, like the Orange River in flood, sweeping along with it in its headlong course mighty trees,

much picturesque flora and fauna, at times even a dead horse—I almost said a dead bronco—but invariably scattering diamonds of the purest ray on all sides. But it could be quiet, too, as still and cool and lucid as a mountain pool.

Let us examine in detail this quieter Campbell. One of the stillest of his poems, and yet one of his most joyful, is *Mass at Dawn.* Indeed, in its reverence for the simple things of life, it is almost a religious poem.

MASS AT DAWN

I dropped my sail and dried my dripping seines
Where the white quay is chequered by cool planes
In whose great branches, always out of sight,
The nightingales are singing day and night.
Though all was grey beneath the moon's grey beam,
My boat in her new paint shone like a bride,
And silver in my baskets shone the bream:
My arms were tired and I was heavy-eyed,
But when with food and drink, at morning light,
The children met me at the water-side,
Never was wine so red or bread so white.

A reflective sonnet that has a hushed beauty all its own is *The Sleeper.* I would also like to quote in full a particular favourite of mine, *The Garden.* I have always loved this poem, and cannot understand why so many critics have passed it over in silence. It has, in my opinion, a definite classic quality.

THE GARDEN

Where not a breeze the silence raids
And by the outer noon forgot,
Strayed sunbeams crack with ruby shot
The smooth gold rind of the grenades:
Lit only by the falling stream,
The Form familiar to my rest
With fluid arm and naked breast
Flushes the crystal of my theme,
Yet on its clearness sheds no haze
Of sorrow more than if a glass

Between me and the sun should pass
To share the unimpeded rays.
Soft fall the laurel-scented hours
Rinsed with the golden light, and long
For those in faith and virtue strong
Shall rain upon their bed of flowers:
While through its falls of silver sheer
Ascends the music of the spring
With fluted throat and jewelled wing
To sing as ever through the year,
How Love was like a Laurel sprung
Within whose quiet ring of shade
Beauty and Wit, like man and maid,
Have lain as we since earth was young—
While all the crowns that glory weaves
To buckle on victorious brows
Were offered for their tent of boughs,
Around whose stillness vainly grieves
The valour that has daunted time,
And all the deathless flow of rhyme
Is but a wind among the leaves.

I have suggested that already in *Adamastor* Campbell is striving, if only subconsciously, after classic values. But was it so subconsciously? Is he not quite conscious of it, when he says in the first few lines of his striking lyric *Autumn:*

I love to see, when leaves depart,
The clear anatomy arrive,
Winter, the paragon of art,
That kills all forms of life and feeling
Save what is pure and will survive.

Surely this is an ideal of beauty that will be simple, unadorned, bare—and so a purely classic concept or norm.

Adamastor, among other things, shows Campbell at the crossroads, both as a man and as a poet. Durban, and the rest of South Africa as well, have changed so much during the past thirty years that a South African English writer can now stay and work here; but for Roy Campbell in the 'twenties' it was impossible. He could not live in England either, for several reasons, one of which is that he was a solar poet. *A solar poet:* it is one of his favourite phrases. He is always hymning the sun. The source of all light and life has

hardly found, in modern poetry, a more assiduous panegyrist than Roy Campbell. Like so many poets and painters before him, he is a son of the sun, he is possessed of the sun, drunk with sunlight. England, with her mists and soft-toned landscapes, her infinite gradations and nuances of blues, half-blues and greys, is not for him. And he finds her intellectual and mental climate as ill-suited to his tastes as her physical climate.

So he settles in Provence, which is as drenched in sunlight as his own country, which has for him in its climate and physical appearance something of South Africa, and where for the first time in his life he can enter fully into what he has come to consider as his European heritage. For is the Mediterranean not *Mare Nostrum*, our sea? Does European civilization and culture not derive from the Mediterranean basin?

While still at Oxford, Campbell had paid a holiday visit to the South of France, in the company of his friend, T. W. Earp. And Provence, particularly, had made a great impression on him. But now he was part of Provence, becoming daily more and more part of the Midi and its ancient culture and civilization. What I have just sketchily indicated is borne out by Campbell's subsequent wanderings. After Provence, Spain in 1933. (Incidentally, I accompanied him there.) Then a few months in England in 1936, after he had been evacuated out of Spain because of the Civil War. Next, Portugal, Spain of the Civil War, Portugal again. Came the long years of the second World War, frequent visits to Spain and Portugal after 1945, and then permanent settlement in Portugal in 1952, with Spain on his doorstep, so to speak. Characteristically enough, he met his death while returning to his home near Lisbon from an Easter visit to Spain. He must be buried quite near the great Portuguese epic poet, Luis de Camoens, for whose work Campbell had an unbounded admiration from early youth,—who, incidentally, gave him that sonorous title, *Adamastor*, and of whom Roy has said in a fine sonnet that he

> Wrestled his hardships into forms of beauty,
> And taught his gorgon destinies to sing.

Adamastor reflects three phases of Roy Campbell's life. First, his stay in South Africa during the years 1925 and 1926. In these poems, many of which were written in South Africa, he expresses both his intense love of South Africa and his often very pronounced dislike of certain South African institutions and attitudes. In *Rounding the Cape* he is speaking of South Africa when he says:

I watch the phantom sinking in the sea
Of all that I have hated or adored.

Secondly, *Adamastor* reflects his brief sojourn in England, and here it must be seen in conjunction with *The Georgiad*, his long satire on certain aspects of English literary life. And, thirdly, *Adamastor* gives us Campbell's first Provençal poems. How much Campbell feels himself at home in Provence, and how sure and skilful the poet's touch is from the very outset in transmuting his first experiences of Provence into poetry, can clearly be seen in that fine poem *Horses on the Camargue*.

It was the greatest of all modern poets, Baudelaire, who said (I quote from memory): "The poet is he who recaptures at will the sense of wonder he had as a child." Campbell is haunted by the beauty and wonder of his childhood. He always harks back to it. We see it in numerous passages, in both his poetry and prose. He could well say, with that other fine French poet, Apollinaire, whom he so much admired: *Mon beau navire, ô ma mémoire* . . . For what the poet has experienced in his childhood and youth, we know only too well, is his mainspring, his deepest motive, his greatest strength. The world of his childhood, growing up as he did in a yet wild Natal at the beginning of the century, was for Campbell a lost paradise. And the more I read Campbell, the more I feel that his love for Provence, Spain, Portugal, was in a sense a journey back to the lost world of his childhood; as well as at the same time an effort, of both his heart and mind, to balance up Europe with South Africa, to equate his past with his present, to make by a constant effort of the will and the imagination some sort of pattern and unity and wholeness and order out of his life that was, like that of so many of us, often chaotic, disordered, and at times lonely indeed.

He was a celebrator of life. Life for him was something splendid, something to rejoice over, something to sing of in clear, throbbing, lark-like tones, or to use a trumpet on. One always felt a little drunk in his company; but it was a mental drunkenness, without a hangover.

He wanted at all times to have a sense of wonder at the beauty and abundance of life and nature. And he could recover, I repeat, that sense of wonder only in the south lands, the lands of the sun. In this sense, the many years he spent in Spain, Provence and Portugal were in a way a hankering after the innocence and simplicity of his childhood and youth under the Southern Cross, another image that haunted his poetry.

His grandfather and father had been pioneers. He would be a pioneer too, but a pioneer of the mind, the spirit, the imagination. Again he could say with Apollinaire:

Nous voulons nous donner de vastes et d'étranges domaines
Où le mystère en fleurs s'offre à qui veut le cueillir.

He wanted to give us and himself "vast and strange domains, where the mystery in flower offers itself to him who wants to pluck it".

He flung himself headlong into this new southern life. He steeped himself in these Romance languages, their literatures. In what seems at first a haphazard way, he read immensely. But it was a slow, methodical and sure way, it becomes obvious to us, once we examine Campbell's method of 'scholarship' more closely. Though he spoke none of these languages fluently, he had an extremely sensitive ear; and he often astonished me in his feeling for a word or a pattern of words, even when that word or those words were unknown to him. In short, Roy Campbell returned to our sources, the Mediterranean matrix of our civilization.

And he did it for another reason as I have already indicated: to deromanticize himself; to become more objective, less decorative, simpler, sharper, more essential; to acquire more discipline, to give the curb and snaffle to that "bloody horse" of his which, he knew only too well, was *loskop*, headstrong and impetuous enough; to restrain his ebullience; to make his verse flow in a more strenuous line; to strive after the classic ideals of order, unity, poise, balance; to come to a new synthesis: a synthesis of what he had in him, as a poet from a young country, of freshness, vigour, vitality, energy, and what Europe could give him of elegance, grace, distinction and an ordered harmonious mind and imagination.

In *The Flaming Terrapin* he speaks of his own poetic instrument as "a lyre of savage thunder", and he states very emphatically his preference for his own Tugela or Orange River above "this too-frequented Hippocrene". Now, ten years or more later, he wants that lyre to be a little less savage, he wants to pluck more harmonious chords from it, he feels, if only instinctively, that although his own beloved Drakensberg still has abundant beauties for him, Mount Parnassus also has its points; and that a respectful sojourn on its nether slopes would certainly stand him as a poet in good stead.

And how successful, right from the outset, Roy Campbell was in his new-found reverence for Mount Parnassus, I wish to point out in discussing in some detail his third volume of lyrical poetry, namely *Flowering Reeds*. In *Flowering Reeds*, the 'savage', the barbarian

that the South African was in the best sense of the word, has become 'civilized', a Provençal without losing anything of his original South African identity. (I do not think I am partial to this small book of poetry because almost all of it was written while I was staying with Roy Campbell on his little farm in Martigues, and because I was the first person in the world to read, or have read to him, most of these poems.) I have always maintained, and I still maintain, that *Flowering Reeds* contains some of the most distinguished verse written in the English language in our time. It was grossly underrated by the English critics on its appearance in 1933 and this is understandable. It was, in a way, out of its time, appearing as it did when the Nazis and Fascists were becoming increasingly more powerful and menacing, when the Popular Front was the clarion call to all liberals and democrats, and when what we would now call 'engaged' or 'committed' poetry—I am thinking here of Auden, Day Lewis, Spender, MacNeice and others—was in full cry, often gaining a prominence out of all proportion to its intrinsic merits. I remember *The Times Literary Supplement* according *Flowering Reeds* three or four paragraphs on a back page in that year. A couple of years ago, however, it made ample amends when, in a detailed survey of English literature during the first half of this century, it classed Roy Campbell as one of the three outstanding living poets in the English language.

But this fine poetry can speak for itself:

THE FLOWERING REED

When the red brands of day consume
And in the darkening Rhône illume
The still reflections of the reed,
I saw its passing leagues of gloom,
Torrential in their strength and speed,
Resisted by a rosy plume
That burned far down among the weed;
As in the dark of Tullia's tomb
The frail wick-tethered phantom set
To watch, remember and regret,
Thawing faint tears to feed its fume
Of incense, spent in one long sigh
The centuries that thundered by
To battle, scooping huge moraines

Across the wreck of fifty reigns;
It held a candle to the eye
To show how much must pass and die
To set such scatheless phantoms free,
Or feather with one reed of rhyme
The boulder-rolling Rhône of time,
That rafts our ruin to the sea.

And *Song* is the hymning of a mood that is part of the aftermath of love, as pure and flawless as a troubadour's song or an Elizabethan lyric.

SONG

You ask what far-off singing
Has mingled with our rest.
It is my love that, winging
The deep wave of your breast,
With white sail homeward turning,
Sings at the golden oar
Of a white city burning
On the battle-tented shore.

Swans is another happy, almost translucently still, love poem.

SWANS

The dark trees slept, none to the azure true,
Save where alone, the glory of the glade,
The cone of one tall cypress cut the blue
And azure on the marble dreamed its shade:
As long as I could feel it next to mine
Her body was illumined by my ghost,
As through the silver of the lighted host
Might flush the ruby reflex of the wine.
The night ran like a river deep and blue:
The reeds of thought, with humming silver wands,
Brushed by our silence like a fleet of swans,
Sang to the passing wave their faint adieu.
Stars in that current quenched their dying flame
Like folding flowers: till down the silent streams,
Swan-drawn among the lilies, slumber came,
Veiling with rosy hand the lamp of dreams.

Choosing a Mast I consider a masterpiece. It is the perfect classical complement to the romantic *Tristan da Cunha*, with all passion spent, all that romantic grandeur, surge and fury, all that melancholy and gloom and despair and loneliness stilled to the grace and loveliness of a Grecian frieze, hushed to the calm, joyful acceptance of the good simple life. In *Choosing a Mast*, Pelion is linked to Provence: the poem has an Attic simplicity of line and design. In its bucolic charm, also, it has an almost Virgilian purity.

I have been hammering the point of Campbell's constant striving, in his second phase, after the classic, the timeless, the eternal. In *Flowering Reeds* he chooses time and again the age-old, time-hallowed symbols of life's fulness and continuity: the small fishing boat, the pine, the olive, the vine, pomegranate, plane tree, nightingale, swan, shell . . . How freshly he does it in an idiom that is completely autonomous! I had already jotted down the notes for this paper when I was pleased to read, in an article by H. K. Girling, the following:

> . . . . his lyrics are expressed in images as old as art and as fresh as the sunrise. . . . The wave, the sail, the oar, the burning city are archetypal images that seem to take us back to the beginning of time, when poets first attempted to fix the elements of existence, the bread and wine of experience, in forms that represented all human inspiration . . . .
>
> (*The Forum*, May 1957).

Mr Girling is here referring in particular to the lyric, *Song*, quoted above.

The Secret Muse I consider to be one of the most beautiful sonnets in modern English poetry, even though in its imagery it owes something to Paul Valéry. (I make no apologies for this opinion, even if Campbell did write the sonnet in the exercise book containing my own first volume of verse, *Kentering*.)

* * *

Let us examine some of the French poets whose influence can clearly be seen in Roy Campbell's poetry. First among them is the *Parnassien*, Leconte de Lisle. The Parnassians revolted against the Romantics, against their divine afflatus, all their soul-searchings and confessions. They might well have said of the Romantics: they confess all right, but they place their confessional stools with a fine flourish in a spotlight slap bang in the middle of the stage of a

packed theatre. Leconte de Lisle and his fellow Parnassians tried to give their poetry more form, more objectivity, the cleanness of sculpture; and these were the qualities that Campbell was also striving after in his poetry. Campbell learned something, too, from Leconte de Lisle in the use of the image that was foreign to European poetry, especially the animal image. (De Lisle had been born on the island of Réunion in the Indian Ocean, and he and Roy Campbell had a similar youth and upbringing.) Consider de Lisle's verses on the sun, in *Midi:*

> Viens! Le soleil te parle en paroles sublimes;
> Dans sa flamme implacable absorbe-toi sans fin;
> Et retourne à pas lents vers les cités infimes,
> Le coeur trempé sept fois dans le néant divin.

For further comparison with Campbell we may note Leconte de Lisle's "animal" poems, *Les Eléphants*, *Le Sommeil du Condor*, *Les Taureaux*, *Le Rêve du Jaguar*, *Les Hurleurs*, as well as *Le Cœur de Hialmar* and other poems.

Also of importance was Alfred de Vigny, a finer poet than de Lisle, whose stoicism, austerity and nobility—I am thinking here also of de Vigny's favourite theme of great men having tremendous burdens which isolate them from the rest of humanity—have a distinct relationship with certain poetic concepts of Campbell. His pictorial quality—as indeed the pictorial and plastic qualities of all the best modern French poets—made a lasting impression, it is quite obvious, on the impressionable mind of the young South African.

There is the same surge and sweep, the same great singing line, the same austere lofty tone in *Tristan da Cunha* as in, for instance, de Vigny's *La Bouteille à la Mer*, or, more particularly, his *La Maison du Berger*. Do not these magnificent lines from *La Maison* remind us of Campbell at his best in *Tristan da Cunha?* The poet is speaking here of nature.

> Je roule avec dédain, sans voir et sans entendre,
> A côté des fourmis les populations;
> Je ne distingue pas leur terrier de leur cendre,
> J'ignore en les portant les noms des nations.
> On me dit une mère et je suis une tombe.
> Mon hiver prend vos morts comme son hécatombe,
> Mon printemps ne sent pas vos adorations.

There is a resemblance, I discovered only when preparing this

paper, between the stanza construction and rhyme scheme of *Tristan da Cunha* and those of both *La Bouteille à la Mer* and *Les Maison du Berger*. Campbell employs the same broad, swinging, twelve-syllabled line as de Vigny in his two famous poems, although Campbell's rhyme pattern is *a b a c b c*, de Vigny's *a b a b cc b*, six lines to de Vigny's seven. In his last stanza, however, he adds a seventh line.

The influence of Baudelaire goes deeper or, rather, is more inward and concealed. There is, of course, a fundamental difference in their characters: Campbell, poet of the sun, contrasting very sharply with Baudelaire, poet especially of the modern city, wrapped in its winter mists, its splenetic moods (using the word spleen here in its Baudelairean sense), the desolation of its human sinfulness, sorrow and suffering. The influence is more in the texture of the words, their musicality, their almost physical quality, the evocative power that words may have—how they can echo and re-echo over the very borders of our subconsciousness, the music behind the music behind the music, if I may put it that way—their pace, rhythm, movement. It is perhaps especially noticeable in the way in which Baudelaire often ends his poems, like a sword slipping into its sheath, or the keel of a boat coming home, as if in a final spurt, on to the sand.

One example will show how Campbell's awareness of the sensuous value of words was heightened by his constant reading of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal:*

THE SISTERS

After hot loveless nights, when cold winds stream
Sprinkling the frost and dew, before the light,
Bored with the foolish things that girls must dream
Because their beds are empty of delight,

Two sisters rise and strip. Out from the night
Their horses run to their low-whistled pleas—
Vast phantom shapes with eyeballs rolling white
That sneeze a fiery steam about their knees:

Through the crisp manes their stealthy prowling hands,
Stronger than curbs, in slow caresses rove,
They gallop down across the milk-white sands
And wade far out into the sleeping cove:

The frost stings sweetly with a burning kiss
As intimate as love, as cold as death:
Their lips, whereon delicious tremors hiss,
Fume with the ghostly pollen of their breath.

Far out on the grey silence of the flood
They watch the dawn in smouldering gyres expand
Beyond them: and the day burns through their blood
Like a white candle through a shuttered hand.

There is a marked influence of Rimbaud too, of course, especially in the idiomatic use of words, a certain fury, violence and dynamic intensity, the bold, stark, "whopping" image, the very composition or structure of some of Campbell's poems. Compare, for instance, part of *The Flaming Terrapin* or *The Albatross* with that miracle poem, *Bateau Ivre;* or certain lines in *The Sisters* with some in *Les Chercheuses de Poux*, where the influence of Rimbaud's sensuousness complements, in Campbell, that of Baudelaire.

Another influence is that of the Breton poet, Tristan Corbière, son of a sea-captain and a poet of the open air, who sailed his own boat in defiance of his mortal illness (he was a consumptive and died at the age of thirty). His poetry is severe, austere, heroic, ironical, *rébarbatif*. Corbière hits back at life and fate; he is sardonic, rough, tough, indomitable. A number of Campbell's sea poems owe something to Tristan Corbière.

The great Provençal poet, Mistral, is also significant. Some of the most striking images in *Horses on the Camargue* come straight out of Mistral's famous epic, *Mireille*. I always thought I was the only person in South Africa to know of these borrowings, only to discover a few days ago that Campbell, in his preface to Paul Koston's special edition of *Adamastor*, published in Cape Town some years back, has blown the gaff himself in the most disarming way. Speaking of *Horses on the Camargue*, he exaggerates somewhat when he says he has lifted the poem "bodily from *Mireille*". He is even more unfair to himself in the same preface when he rejects, categorically, the whole of *The Flaming Terrapin* as "bad Rimbaud".

Then there was the later influence of Valéry and Apollinaire, the former in the use of the intellectual or conceptual image and even in the choice of certain themes and very striking images—compare *The Palm* with *Palme*, *Pomegranates* with *Les Grenades*, *The Gum trees*

with *Au Platane* etc. Some of the poems in Campbell's *Mithraic Emblems* patently owe something to Apollinaire's splendid *La Chanson du Mal Aimé* and several other poems in *Alcools* and *Calligrammes*.

Later still we have the inspiration of the Spanish poets such as Rubén Darío (as in Campbell's stirring *Toril*) and Garcia Lorca. But the influence of the French poets, coming to Campbell at an earlier, more impressionable stage of his development, is infinitely greater than that of the Spaniards or South Americans.

Campbell himself once said over the BBC: "I am the greatest robber in the English language"—perhaps filibuster or buccaneer would have been a more appropriate word—and I remember his telling me one day: "There isn't a single original image in literature, they all flow out of one another." In a way this is true of some of the greatest poets. One has only to think of Virgil, Molière, Shakespeare, how they translated, borrowed or stole right and left. It is not what you steal that matters, but what you *do* with what you have stolen.

If what you have borrowed, or made use of, does not stick out like a sore thumb from your own poem or work, if it has been completely assimilated by you and is now germane to your poem; if it fits tonally and in every respect into the rest of the poem, and the poem in its entirety does not too forcibly remind the reader of one of the sources of its inspiration, or does not fall so far below the original poem or passage that it sets up a dissonance in the reader's mind; then, and then only, it has become your own, it is part and parcel of *your* poetry, intrinsic and essential to a *new* autonomous whole.

T. S. Eliot and Roy Campbell were both influenced by the modern French poets—but with entirely different results. Campbell only borrows images from Apollinaire; but Apollinaire goes, so it seems to me, into the very texture of some of the best of Eliot's earlier poems, like *Prufrock*, into the brokenness of the tone, the sad faltering, the dying fall of the lines, the extraordinary effectiveness of Eliot's long rhyming lines (often a couplet) used in the freest possible way, holding the poem with all its jumps and leaps, its brusque associations (or disassociations) firmly together, and giving it, above all, a subtle refined musical pattern.

The French poets, especially Laforgue, helped Eliot to represent the split or broken-up modern man, he who inhabits the waste land, for whom the world ends not with a bang but with a whimper,

who seems so hopelessly involved in the modern dilemma; whereas, in the case of Campbell, they helped him to body forth his ideal man of action and valour and joy and gaiety. Eliot, in *Prufrock*, says:

. . . . I have measured out my life with coffee-spoons . . .

Campbell in *Familiar Daemon* says:

Measuring out my life in flagons
(No coffee-spoons to stem the flood) . . .

How great is the contrast between coffee-spoons and flagons! But my comment here is hardly fair to such a fine and subtle poet as Eliot, especially in his earlier work.

Of Roy Campbell's poetry I should like to say, finally, that whatever its faults may be—and there are serious limitations, of course, at times—when all the cliques, claques and coteries of our time have settled into their rightful little grooves, Roy Campbell will stand out as one of the few really powerful lyrical voices of his generation in the English language.

THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

MICHAEL GOLDMAN

I PROPOSE to draw attention to a silence. The English School at Cambridge is young; it was called into being in 1917. What it has had to say, its characteristic stance, has not varied greatly over the past forty years. True, the literary pendulum has traced its movement in Cambridge. Mr John Holloway[1] has outlined in a series of radio talks what he calls the "Establishment" in English criticism, and in specifying its rigidity he has aligned himself with the natural reaction to the particular concerns of modern textual analysis—a reaction which may be felt today at Cambridge, in so many ways the birth place of that criticism. All are certainly aware of the shift in taste Mr Holloway has outlined; to indicate its currency it is perhaps necessary for me only to mention that Miss Muriel Bradbrook, lecturing on tragedy, will freely invoke Pope's famous comments on Shakespeare's characters to express the genius of their creation, a reference that in the days of *Elizabethan Stage Conditions* would have seemed the sheerest solecism. But this shift in taste is not central to the character of the Cambridge English School. The continuity of means, ends and assumptions remains, and if one feels that something of the original excitement must be lacking—as I do—it is not to what is said but to what is no longer said that one has to turn for explanation. A great debate seems now to be gathering head in England over university education; it is in the context of this debate that I find the English School here silent; and I find this silence suggestive of a loss of purpose, a loss of the sense of the ways in which literary studies are related to life. It is, in short, a loss of *educational* purpose that I am aware of. In the comments that follow I hope to establish the centrality of that purpose to the whole idea of the Cambridge English School and perhaps to suggest how the silence—which in any case cannot be long maintained—may best be broken.

Let us begin by determining the continuity of which I just spoke.[2]

[1] "The New Establishment in Criticism", *The Listener*, Sept. 20 and 27, 1956.
[2] For most of the information that follows I am indebted to the Master of Jesus, Dr. E. M. W. Tillyard, who has graciously allowed me to read in manuscript his forthcoming book on the history of the English Tripos, tentatively entitled *The Muse Unchained.*

I said that it was a continuity of means, ends and assumptions, and these terms suggest three important elements in the School, as founded in 1917, that I wish to bring out. Under the heading of means, we can look at the English Tripos as recommended in the report of the Special Board to the Senate on 22 February 1917. Two examinations were recommended, one in Old English. The other, "Section A", formed the nucleus of both parts of the present day English Tripos, and may be quoted in full.

Six papers of three hours each:

1 Questions and essays on the general history of English literature since 1603.
2 Shakespeare—passages for explanation and discussion—with questions on language, metre, literary history and literary criticism.
3 (*a*) Prescribed period *or*
(*b*) History of English Language.
4 English literature, life and thought, 1350-1603.
5 (*a*) Special subject in general history of literature in connection and comparison with English literature *or*
(*b*) Anglo-Saxon and (optional) early Norse; with questions on literary history and subject matter.
6 (*a*) English life, literature and thought, 1066-1350 *or*
(*b*) The History of Literary Criticism[3].

If we compare this with the present examination schedule, we realize that any differences are merely the result of elaboration, not of vital change, with two exceptions. And these exceptions bring us very neatly to our other two heads.

The two exceptions are papers that were added in 1926, when Section A was expanded to make English a complete course for the B.A. degree. These were 'The English Moralists', a paper on the same lines as the criticism paper, with the *Republic* and the *Ethics* as its basis, and a practical criticism paper, 'Passages of English Prose and Verse for Critical Comment'. The introduction of Section A had signified a move away from philology to close critical reading, as the major discipline in the study of English, and towards a greater emphasis on the history of culture and civilization. The two new papers helped to confirm these two movements—which correspond to the elements of continuity I distinguished under the heads 'ends and assumptions'. Emphasis on 'practical criticism' was, as everyone knows, the most prominent characteristic of the critical

[3]Quoted by Tillyard, see note 2 above.

work that seemed to flow out to the literary world from the Cambridge of Richards, Ogden and Mansfield Forbes, and very soon of F. R. Leavis and William Empson as well. The practical criticism paper grew out of those remarkable sessions under the supervision of Richards and Forbes that the former has recorded in his *Practical Criticism*. The attractions that close analysis suddenly revealed in the early twenties were many; and it is not our place here to separate out the various influences, anthropological, psychological, philosophical, that—especially at Cambridge—brought modern criticism about. Dr Tillyard[4] remembers particularly the influence of Freud,

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of the notion of hidden and important meanings beneath the surface of all expression. He also remembers the impact of Eliot's criticism on Cambridge, and sees Eliot as something of a spiritual father to the School of English, "the man really responsible for introducing into Cambridge a set of new ideas that both shocked and satisfied". But, as a practising critic, Eliot's main effort was, as he explained it, to reintroduce 'the sense of fact', and it was this sense of the factual reference of literary sensibility that was embodied in the practical criticism paper. The continuity of this reference is unbroken today, both within and without the 'Establishment' at Cambridge. Mr Holloway's articles make it clear that, although there may be some excesses in the methods of Dr Leavis and Professor Empson, there can be no going back on the sense of fact their efforts have embodied.

The emphasis on the history of culture and civilization that I saw embodied in the Moralists paper, among others, points to what I called the continuity of assumptions in the Cambridge School. A. C. Chadwick, Professor of Anglo-Saxon in Cambridge, was a great power, politically the most important one, behind the changes of 1917, and it was his belief, as Dr Tillyard[5] says, "that English was destined to take the place of Classics in humane education." This belief in the centrality of English studies is the key assumption behind the whole purpose and power of the Cambridge School. The men who created the English Tripos were not primarily concerned with establishing a new trend in criticism, or with turning out promising academic recruits. They were offering what they considered the best education available to the young intellect coming up to Cambridge after the Great War. The new criticism was but an offspring of this belief; it was an attempt to put on a scientific basis the moral importance that had been attached, though often in

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[4] See note 2 above.
[5] See note 2 above.

a foggy manner, to the study of literature throughout the nineteenth century. To-day, though we may be retreating from the scientific implications of the attempt, we hold fast to its impulse, which at least has broken through the fog and brought our aspirations to moral insight under some discipline appropriate to our times. At Cambridge, where the impulse originated, the belief has never been abandoned. Chadwick's remarks find echoes everywhere we turn. If we take characteristic statements by Dr Leavis and by Dr Tillyard, we see on what uniform educational assumptions the most varying critical approaches in the Cambridge School may be found to rest:

> *Dr Tillyard.* We thought that if a man entered his subject in this way he could learn to deal with the experience of life better than if he had been trained to accumulate the facts of vowel-changes in Middle English dialects or of literary biography.[6]
>
> *Dr Leavis.* The essential discipline of an English School is the literary-critical; it is a true discipline, only in an English School if anywhere will it be fostered, and it is irreplaceable. It trains, in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating a sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity of intelligence.[7]

We have, then, a continuity of means, ends and assumptions at Cambridge, a continuity all the more vital because it is bound up with the history of modern criticism and with the moral aspirations behind that history. And the continuity remains genuine, not a mere rigidity or stagnation. Nonetheless, certain questions force themselves upon the investigator. Why, for instance, are the Tripos questions in English never so ambitious as those on the more general papers of the History Tripos? The assumptions behind the setting of a question like, "Discuss the part played since 1500 by either the Bible or the Classics in the making of the modern world", may be unjustified, but they suggest that in practice the History Faculty has more confidence in the relevance of its discipline to 'the experience of life', to training a 'delicate integrity of intelligence' than the English Faculty has. Or (a second question) what will be the effect of the emergence of a generation trained in school on 'practical criticism' (what Dr Tillyard calls the "new kind of freshman who had anticipated at school things which had better be kept for

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[6]See note 2 above.
[7]*Education and the University* (London: 1943), p. 34.

university") on the standards of the Tripos? And why does Dr Tillyard feel compelled to suggest that there are, "a number of reasons why a certain school of studies should gradually have lost its former sense of direction and concerted activity"?

All these questions seem to undercut the continuity precisely at those heads of means, ends and assumptions we have investigated. They might be answered—as I think even Dr Tillyard is inclined to answer them—by referring to the exhaustion of the 'Establishment'. But there are reasons, as I hope I have shown, for believing that in its positive aspects the Establishment is not exhausted, that major elements in its tradition remain flexible and active in the English School to-day. For answer, I can only do what I promised at the outset of these comments—indicate a silence. The third element of continuity that we distinguished involved assumptions about the place of English studies in society; these are, as we have seen, germinal to the other elements and to the idea of the Cambridge School itself. In the current debate over university education, these assumptions have been challenged on every hand, but so far no one from the Faculty of English has raised his voice in their defence. This is the silence I mean, and it is very disturbing.

The debate reached some focus earlier this year, in articles published by *The Financial Times*[8] and *The Economist*[9]. *The Financial Times* was simply giving prominence to a group of figures well-known by now, but *The Economist* was airing beliefs one was surprised to find in a conservative journal. The facts are roughly these. There are now 84,000 students at the university level in Great Britain. By 1970 this population is expected to reach 140,000. To meet this increase, something like £84 million is to be spent between now and 1964 on university building. Government funds will of course be involved, and where they are not, fund-raising will keep the expansion a matter of public interest. This necessary expansion must raise large questions of change in university policy. The recent importance of scientific education in the news, as well as Labour's open concern with school reform, leaves the universities especially vulnerable to outside pressures. *The Economist* gave us a taste of what we might expect those pressures to be like. Briefly, it advocated a lowering of standards and a broader base of education *in the Oxford and Cambridge Honour Schools;* it implied also that

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[8] *Financial Times*, Feb. 12, 1958.

[9] "Not Don's Delight", *Economist*, March 1, 1958.

the present concerns of the Arts Schools were rather rarefied and esoteric:

> Are the universities . . . going to continue to regard themselves as existing only to turn out an élite of highly trained urbanely specialized men and women, and to gear their whole approach and teaching methods to endlessly reproducing dons and higher civil servants? Or are they going to accept the logic of expanding higher education—which is not only to fill the quota of dons and permanent secretaries, as indeed it must be filled, but also to make the mass of people now just below 'university level' more educated than they are?

A genuine educational need was, perhaps, being expressed. But it somewhat irrelevantly accompanied, if indeed it did not conspire to mask, an assault on the already none-too-high standards of the ancient universities.

Significantly enough, no official voice was raised at Cambridge with reference to these statements, though the student newspaper tried to give them publicity. As the year continued, even *The Times Literary Supplement*[10] took up the debate—obliquely enough, with a leader on the Greats course at Oxford, which concluded that *history* was still "the proper study of men of affairs today".) Later,[11] the *Supplement* added to this provocative speculation some unflattering remarks on the quality of undergraduate writing at the ancient universities. But their columns have remained innocent of response.[12]

It is hard to imagine that this silence can continue. On 14 May, *The Manchester Guardian* jumped the gun on a piece of information that no amount of secrecy could have long kept out of the public forum. The plans for the establishment of Churchill College are by now probably well enough known to my readers. It will do, however, to remind them of the unprecedented stipulation as to its student population, 70 per cent of which will consist of scientists. The condition of the other 30 per cent who already seem destined to be, if not the weakest group of Arts students in the university, at least the most hapless, must inevitably direct attention to the great

[10] "Politics and Education", *Times Literary Supplement*, March 21, 1958.
[11] "Young Men Talking", *Times Literary Supplement*, March 28, 1958.
[12] Not entirely. As I was preparing these notes the *Times Literary Supplement* for May 30 arrived, with a leader, "Why Read?" The only answer it could find to this question was that "People who possess (literary culture) are not necessarily more useful, happier or wiser than other people; but they do possess a set of resources within themselves, which they would not be without . . ." This is, surely, a minimal formulation.

question of the rôle of the Arts in the modern university. One can foresee that the humane letters, in particular, will be called upon to justify their existence.

The point I wish to make, then, is that without this sense of large self-justification, the English School at Cambridge loses its characteristic vigour, and that to some extent this has occurred. The loss is not total, however, nor is there reason to fear that it is permanent. I conducted a series of interviews earlier this year with members of the various faculties on a number of academic topics, particularly the relation of the university to society. The response from the members of the English Faculty interviewed showed a continuing belief in the traditional values of the School as outlined above, but much uncertainty and disagreement as to its broader social rôle. One don felt that "the study of literature at Cambridge was a way of focussing a whole culture", but added that university life was, "an interregnum between the irresponsibilities of childhood, and the endless responsibilities that come later". Another thought that "the Cambridge link with public life" should be strengthened by an Arts-Science course; while a third blankly stated that he "doubted the claims made for such triposes as English, Classics, History, that they train the mind, discipline the intelligence, refine the sensibility, etc." Clearly the central assumptions of the English School, if they are to remain viable, are in for some re-examination.

The temptation is great to go beyond my topic, to begin the re-examination here and now. But this would be inappropriate in more ways than one, for the re-examination will do Cambridge no good, unless it come from within the School itself. Most of us, I believe, have been influenced by the Cambridge School of English, whether we have ever been near the Cam or not. Further, I think that most of us share its implicit belief in the extra-literary value of literary studies. In America, where I live, as on the African continent, the universities are young; there is a sense of new ground to be broken in education and society; embarrassing and impatient questions are likely to be asked of us and of our discipline. For the time being, at least, the atmosphere surrounding Cambridge will remain polite; but the questions are being asked all the same, and we are all concerned in the answers that will be given. We can only hope that they will be given soon, firmly and at length.

THE POET AND THE ALBATROSS

(A Study in Symbolic Suggestion)

W. H. GARDNER

Whether at once, as once at a crash Paul,
Or as Austin, a lingering-out sweet skill,
Make mercy in all of us, out of us all
Mastery, but be adored, but be adored King.
(G. M. Hopkins)

Though what I want
or what desire
is half of ice
and half of fire.
(Anthony Delius)

I

IN recent years much has been written to explain the origins and the powerful, universal appeal of Coleridge's masterpiece, *The Ancient Mariner*. John Livingston Lowes, in his definitive account[1] of the way the poet's "shaping imagination" fused and harmonized the multifarious impressions derived from his reading in books about the sixteenth century voyages, takes no account of

> emotional forces as determining either the selection or the fashioning of the material of the poem . . . he emphatically repudiates any intention of dealing with the 'possible symbolism of wish-fulfilment or conflict or what not'.

It was left to later critics, like I'Anson Fausset, Maud Bodkin, Sir Maurice Bowra, Robert Penn Warren, Dr Tillyard and others to "conceive the possibility of conflicts or wish-fulfilments so universal as to echo through poetry from age to age".[2]

At the time when I was receiving the full impact of *The Ancient Mariner* through my own direct reading of the poem, I noticed that the Albatross, or some other solitary bird such as the hawk or the phoenix, had been used as a powerful image or symbol by a number of more recent poets, including Baudelaire, Hopkins and Roy

[1] *The Road to Xanadu* (1930).
[2] Maud Bodkin: *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934), p. 40.

Campbell. It also struck me that Coleridge and these three later poets all had something in common: all were sensitive, passionate, and attracted in one way or another towards Christianity and the problem of evil; all, moreover, were to some degree 'maimed'—psychically, morally or physically—though maimed, paradoxically, in such a way that their poetry derived additional force from their disability. Three of them had virtually abandoned Christianity and eventually returned to it; three of them were Roman Catholics—two of them by conversion, the other, Baudelaire, by what might rather be called 'inversion'. But we shall return to these poets incidentally.

The critic who seems to have gone farthest in his search for and interpretation of symbols in *The Ancient Mariner* is Mr Robert Penn Warren, of whose essay the late Humphry House[3] has said:

> Mr Warren himself fully allows for the possibility (even likelihood) that Coleridge did not consciously use symbols at all. This is consistent with Coleridge's recognition of the unconscious element in the workings of genius; but it does not therefore follow that there was a latent precision waiting for critics to elucidate it. Mr Warren seems in the last resort to be a precisionist more because he wishes to make clear to himself and others some features of the richness he has found in the poem than because he believes that the poem actually works upon its readers by the methods of precision.

What we all deprecate, says House, is the idea that there is scarcely any content or meaning at all, that all is "atmosphere . . . thin, vague and 'magical'."

Most of these findings are acceptable; but the fact that Coleridge had a *conscious* feeling for symbols—a feeling that might well have stirred the subliminal activity of his imagination, is proved by the following: "In looking at objects of nature I seem rather to be seeking, as it were *asking* for, a symbolic language for something within me that already and forever exists,than observing anything new."[4] Nevertheless I think those commentators are right who, like Sir Maurice Bowra and Mr Warren, find in this poem a significant 'unconscious' symbolism. Yet their interpretations, however stimulating, do not account for, neither, I think, do they invalidate, my own different response to the work. A full and deep 'experiencing' of a poem of this order depends to a large extent on the total

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[3] *Coleridge* (1953), p. 108.
[4] *Anima Poetae*, p. 136; quoted by Maud Bodkin, op. cit., p. 34.

experience the reader himself brings to it. Although one may be guilty of reading into the poem what is not there, it is more cogent to say that such a poem insistently reads itself into one's own experience. Without claiming to have found precise symbols which are valid for all readers, I shall now try to make clear, by a method I shall call 'symbolic analogy', the way the poem has worked on me and the main features of the richness I have found in it. These features will be found in strata of meaning below the surface-brilliance of rhythm, diction and imagery—below that richness of texture which everyone acknowledges and appreciates. Moreover my search for moral, metaphysical and mytho-theological implications will centre round that so-called "trivial act", the shooting of the Albatross—an act apparently unmotivated (like the voyage itself) and one for which the Mariner and crew suffered, apparently, excessive and oddly apportioned punishment. The Albatross, together with those "supernatural parts" which Charles Lamb and thousands like him have dismissed as uninteresting, has proved for me not only the centre of interest but also the key to the deeper meaning and values of the poem as a whole.

As early as 1926 Hugh I'Anson Fausset pronounced *The Ancient Mariner* an "involuntary . . . projection into imagery of Coleridge's own inner discord".[5] In 1934 Miss Bodkin found in the poem what Lascelles Abercrombie called that essentially romantic characteristic—"the projection of the inner experience outward upon actuality".[6] Yet neither Miss Bodkin nor any other critic that I have read seems to me to have gone far enough in showing how the Mariner and the Albatross reflect the conflict within the nature of that intensely self-conscious being, Coleridge, and within the mind and heart of that equally self-tormented entity, modern Man: for instance, the conflict between "his assertion of his separate individuality and his craving for oneness with the group—family or community—of which he is a part".[7] From now on I shall be largely speculating or reasoning from facts about the nature of Coleridge's unconscious or subconscious mind and motives. Hence, to make the reader sharply aware of those *biographical* facts which must have gone far towards shaping the pattern of Coleridge's thought, outlook and inner discord in that period between the autumn of 1797 and the summer of 1798, when the poem was written—experience tha

[5] *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, p. 166.
[6] Maud Bodkin, op. cit., p. 34.
[7] Bodkin, op. cit., p. 60.

was ripe for projection "outward upon actuality"—I shall first give a brief résumé of his early life.

Son of a clergyman, educated as a "charity boy" at Christ's Hospital (mark the name), Coleridge at seventeen had become so deeply immersed in metaphysical and theological reading that "everything else became insipid". With the breaking of this obsession by his discovery of Bowles's sonnets, "Truth (said Hazlitt) had found a new ally in Fancy." Something of a misfit in his own family, and often forced to endure long periods of loneliness while a boarder in London, Coleridge became "a keenly affectionate but often sick and frustrated man—constantly haunted by self-pity and remorse, by his yearning for family happiness and his impulse to run away." Although his fatal desultoriness had set in at Cambridge, he became active in politics and involved, significantly, in the Unitarian heresy. In a mood of heavy despondency he enlisted in the Light Dragoons under the fantastic name of Silas Tomkins Comberbacke; and having been rescued and brought back to Cambridge, he conceived "Pantisocracy", proposed to a woman and was rejected, became a violent Jacobinical critic,[8] began the long estrangement of an unwise marriage, left the university without a degree, and finished up by projecting an abortive paper, *The Watchman*, touring the country for subscribers and preaching Unitarian sermons as he went. A queer, almost crazed first voyage into the ocean of life, yet symptomatic of strength as well as weakness—a restless seeking for some ideal.

Hazlitt's account[9] of Coleridge's visit to Shrewsbury in January 1798 throws much light on the psychic personality we are investigating. Hazlitt found Coleridge a continuous and brilliant talker, whose spell had bound many besides John Chester; a man perverse in his judgments, "always preferring the unknown to the known"—extravagantly praising or inveterately condemning; evidently a man with a great need of self-expression and a respectful audience. As Coleridge delivered his first sermon, Hazlitt listened entranced to the "winged thoughts" of this "half inspired" speaker, noticing the "feeble nose" and the "pendulous Christlike hair peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenwards." Such hair, Hazlitt adds, "ought to belong to all who preach *Christ crucified*, and

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See C. Brinton: *Political Ideas of the English Romanticists* (O.U.P., 1926), p. 67–75, where the author shows how Coleridge moved from ideas which in 1795 seemed "dangerously revolutionary" to a more orthodox Burkian position.

My First Acquaintance with Poets.

Coleridge was at that time one of those!" Hazlitt stressed the anomaly: "a poet and a philosopher getting up in a Unitarian pulpit to preach the Gospel . . . a sort of revival of the spirit of primitive Christianity".

The text of the sermon was, "And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE"—the last words being pronounced loud, deep and distinct. "The idea of St John came into mind, of one crying in the wilderness." The preacher then launched into his subject "like an eagle dallying with the wind . . . The sermon was upon peace and war; upon Church and State—not their alliance but their separation—*on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same but as opposed to one another*." He talked of those who "*inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore*." When it was all over Hazlitt "returned home well satisfied." Even the sun, labouring through mists, "seemed an emblem of the *good cause*".

From the above data I infer that the man who was then engaged in writing *The Ancient Mariner* was intensely introverted, individualistic; there was also, perhaps, a touch of megalomania in his desire to excel and to lead. At the same time he was altruistic (and, as psychologists would say, a little masochistic, too) in his desire to serve humanitarian causes. His Unitarian relegation of Christ to a status below godhead was unconsciously balanced by a measure of self-elevation: if Christ was only an 'exceptionally gifted man'—well, so was S.T.C.! Was there not a general adulation of his natural gifts—together with his own consciousness of developing genius and high moral purpose? Yet this sense of power was exacerbated, too, by a consciousness of moral vacillation and failure, the result being a suspicion of paranoia,the bitterness of frustrated egoism. Could it be also that doubts about his subtraction of the 'supernatural' from Christ were 'compensated' by his addition of the 'supernatural' to poetry?

Like most young poets, Coleridge interpreted "Christ crucified" mainly in terms of humanitarian pacifism, championship of the weak and meek, of all victims of social oppression and military aggression. Like Blake, he was appalled at the Christian world's cynical disregard of the Sermon on the Mount, at its sadistic readiness to destroy for relatively trivial gains—Hamlet's "egg-shell". As a revolutionary thinker, both political and religious, the young Coleridge stood apart, for a time at least, from the society that had bred him. (In a similar way, but for different reasons, Baudelaire,

Hopkins and Roy Campbell put themselves into a kind of isolation. Yet none of them was a Nietzsche: they all needed human friendship, the warm human contacts.) I believe that Coleridge at twenty-five was acutely conscious of his own real or apparent moral aberrations—his enlisting, if only out of pique, under the "banners dripping with human gore", his failure as a husband, his revolt against powerful traditional dogmas and, for a time, against the ordered society he wished to serve. Alternately, his sense of guilt and insufficiency was repressed, working at lower levels to produce an outward spasmodic activity and a subliminal desire for relief, adjustment and self-punishment. This submerged need for a restoration of order and balance in his own ideas was, I believe, projected into the symbolic world of *The Ancient Mariner*. Feeling at once the need and the difficulty of a reconciliation of religion and philosophy, he fused both in art and created, in poetic terms, an ordered world of moral values. Yet because a moral order amid chaos is never complete but is always 'becoming', *The Ancient Mariner* ends on a note of protracted penance, missionary exile—a virtual martyrdom.

Before beginning this poem Coleridge had planned to write, with Wordsworth, a poem called *The Wanderings of Cain*. This was fortunately abandoned in favour of "a different voyage, to firmer anchorage and a securer port". Nevertheless as House says, "*The Wanderings of Cain* shows how the subject of terrible guilt, suffering, expiation and wandering was already in Coleridge's mind before the various hints which were to form the outline of the Mariner's story came together."[10] As we shall see, the choice of Cain, the Rejected, the Murderer, symbol of all sins of violence, was significant. Coleridge had also been collecting material for six great "Hymns to the Sun, the Moon, and the Elements"; and although this material, together with his reading in the *Voyages*, supplied him with most of his geographical and other natural data, and although it was Wordsworth who suggested the nature of the Mariner's crime, yet once Coleridge's unconscious mind had absorbed the elements into its own seething life, its mysterious co-ordinated dynamism must have helped to shape incidents and images which gave relief or compensation to the inner tensions, thereby making *The Ancient Mariner* the true 'objective correlative' of the poet's inner life in the period 1797-98.

Two last sanctions from Coleridge himself before I begin my own

[10]Op. cit., p. 84.

hazardous voyage through the poem. In a letter to Sotheby of September 10, 1802,[11] Coleridge said that the two subjects which in the very depths of his nature had most interested him were Hebrew and Christian Theology, and the Theology of Plato. Now as a Unitarian, Coleridge in 1798 was supposed to have rejected all orthodox Christian theology; hence his later return to orthodox Anglicanism might suggest that his early 'winging' of Christ, shooting Him down from His divine heights, never amounted to an absolute conviction. As regards Plato, he says in the same letter that Milton, with his "platonizing spirit . . . wrote nothing without an interior meaning", and that "'Where more is meant than meets the ear' is true of Milton beyond all writers". Milton, he says, believed that all fiction "should be consecrated by being emblematic of some truth". Coleridge deprecates "the general ridicule cast on all allegorizing of poets", and he himself allegorizes the Haemony passage in *Comus*[12] by deriving Haemony from the Greek *haima oinos* ('blood-wine') and finding in this plant not only "the great symbol of the Death on the Cross" but also a symbol of the sorrows (prickles) and triumph (golden flower) of the Christian life. This reassures me: I feel that what I am about to do with *The Ancient Mariner* is not altogether alien to Coleridge's own way of looking at great Christian poetry. Secondly, Coleridge's own platonizing spirit is again shown in the Latin epigraph from Burnet, in which the latter, having said that the mind intuitively senses the presence of invisible spirits in the universe, goes on to say that "it is desirable to contemplate in thought . . . an image of a greater and better world", lest the mind becoming too deeply involved in small everyday matters "should become too narrow and lapse into mean thoughts". For Coleridge all literature was a search for the ideal activity in life; and that ideal was spiritual rather than materialistic.

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[11]See the Penguin *Coleridge*, p. 126—8

[12]Lines 629—641, and especially:—

Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out.
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon; etc.

This last line suggests to me the shooting of the Albatross in Coleridge's poem! Yet one editor of *Comus*, W. Bell, after quoting Coleridge's interpretation of this passage, simply says: "Milton's Haemony is simply 'the magical plant'."

II

By 'symbolic analogy' the Mariner's story suggests to me certain ignificant features in the life of Man (both individual and collective), ith special reference to the Christian era. No 'symbol' has for me fixed or 'univocal' character, as it would have in allegory or as it ight have in any deliberate or studied form of symbolism. Certain ain features, such as the ship (the world, or society) and the ocean ime), may retain a fairly constant value, as they do in, say, Conrad's *he Nigger of the Narcissus;* but most of the other features are like evolving bodies which keep their general formal identities, but show ver-changing facets. The Mariner, for instance, is equivocal, some- mes suggesting Everyman and the normal span of his life, at other mes suggesting the human species or, more specifically, historic Western Man. The Sun stands for primal cosmic power, but in my ersonal reading this power has two modalities, viz. (*a*) Divine ower, and (*b*) such Power as it operates through Man and is in a nse directed by Man's will. The most powerful form of symbolism that in which the symbols assert their significance and work upon s unexpectedly (almost like the 'irony of events' in tragedy) and ffect us simultaneously in different areas and levels of experience. here is a certain obscure logic in their operations, but the latter nnot be regimented into an artificially rigid system.

The ship and its crew set off amid general gaiety—for no specified estination. So in human life every baby is laughed and cooed er as it sets out on its vaguely charted voyage. The same is true any voyage of the mind and spirit—a purely metaphysical explora- on of the meaning and purpose of life (Thought at the prow and eeling at the helm). The significance of the Wedding Feast and e mesmerized Wedding Guest does not begin to dawn upon us ntil we have reached the end of the poem *many times*; but here e may note in passing that a Wedding Feast is a symbol of con- mmation and continuity—not only on the physical side (procrea- on), but also on the moral and spiritual side, as in Christ's parable the Divine Bridegroom. The Wedding Guest was not allowed enter the Feast (to enjoy the triumph and gold flower of Heaven) ntil he had heard the full story of sin and expiation, had felt the arious sufferings of the Mariner—had, in a sense, been redeemed him and made thereby a sadder and a wiser man.

> Merrily did we drop
> Below the kirk, below the hill,
> Below the lighthouse top.

It might be possible to allegorize this carefree *dropping* below the line of vision which normally anchors us to the protective Church, the familiar vantage point, and the friendly beacon which indicates what searoad is safe and what dangerous—but I leave it to the reader to accept these hints or ignore them.

The ship enjoys a good wind and fair weather as far as the Equator —the Line which indicates the fullest rotundity of the earth and suggests the median of human physical and mental maturity. Lamb said that until we are thirty we think ourselves immortal. Someone else has opined that we spend the first half of life preparing to live and the second half preparing to die. Certainly the moral and metaphysical problems thicken as we approach thirty-five. Dante's *Inferno* begins: "Midway upon the journey of my life I found myself in a dark wood." Thirty-five found Mr Eliot between his "Waste Land" and "Ash Wednesday", and it was exactly at thirty-five that Hopkins entered his period of desolation ("alarms of wars") with

> When will you ever, Peace, wild wooddove, shy wings shut
> Your round me roaming end and under be my boughs?

So all went well with the ship until the Line was reached:

> Higher and higher every day,
> Till over the mast at noon—
> The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
> For he heard the loud bassoon.

This Everyman in festive attire has reached his Rubicon, which he does *not* want to cross. Life, gay and untormented, calls him—with the voice of a bassoon. Of course, Coleridge wanted "bassoon" to rhyme with "noon"; but he happened to choose the most ambiguous of wind instruments, the drily humorous note of which can express an eerie menace, as in Grieg's *Cave of the Mountain King*. So the Guest cannot break away. Even the unconcerned, the unimpressionable, are sometimes forced to learn the truth: wisdom is thrust upon them.

> And now the STORM BLAST came, and it
> Was tyrannous and strong:

—words which *instress* not only the Mariner's eloquence and compelling will but also and more significantly those gathering pressures, wordly and unworldly, which drive us out of the genial warmth of early manhood into a chilling awareness of our own weakness and mortality. Therefore the region of antarctic ice and fog into which the ship is blown signifies for me not only the cramping horrors of man's first sharp realization of his own physical and

spiritual vulnerability, but also that partial renunciation of the sensual life to which he must submit himself before 'faith' and 'the religious life' can begin to redeem him. The Mariner's "land of ice" has an austere beauty but contains no living creature. The crew feels cut off from the source of all Life, a feeling intensified by a threat of dissolution—the convulsive splitting of that vast thrombotic arrestment of waters (water should be free-flowing, life-giving). Ice is the traditional symbol of asceticism, deprivation. In Dante's *Inferno* it constitutes the very bottom of the pit, reserved for the cold and cruel egoism of treachery (including treachery to *guests*), and is symbolic of Man's most complete separation from the Sun—of God's grace. Hence Coleridge's polar ice symbolizes the sensitive man's *selva oscura*, "fell of dark", Waste Land—his foretaste of Hell; his equivalent, on a lower plane, of the mystic's Dark Night of the Soul, his being forcibly detached from the comforting ties and assurances of our everyday existence; and all this as a probation, an inoculation against Hell, a step towards a closer union with the Absolute. Similarly in Hopkins's *The Wreck of the Deutschland* the freezing snowstorm in that "shock night" is symbolic of that astringent phase of life which wrings from the heart a cry for divine aid, the tall nun's "Christ, come quickly". It was not only of freezing, perishing *bodies* that Hopkins was thinking when he wrote: "They fought with God's cold."

At this point, we are free to imagine, the crew need some relief, some sign, some promise—and it comes:

> At length did cross an Albatross,
> Thorough the fog it came;
> As if it had been a Christian soul,
> We hailed it in God's name.

A "Christian soul" should be one that is imbued with the spirit of Christ, and the bird's meek, friendly behaviour justifies the comparison. For years now I have been unable to think of this "pious bird of good omen" as anything less than a symbol of Christ Himself, or at least of that "truth-giving Spirit" which Christ said would be sent in due course to 'befriend' his followers (*John*, 15 and 16). The springing up of "a good South wind"[13] (throughout the poem the wind represents the Breath of God, the "wind fulfilling His word" of Psalm 148), and the consequent release of the ship from the bonds of ice, convey to me, in powerful overtones, the liberation

[13] Cf. *Ecclesiastes*, I. 6: "The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north, etc."

of the human spirit from its 'metaphysical fear' through the redemptive grace of those primal Christian virtues, Love (Charity) and Joy (Hope); and Faith also is implied in the fact that the crew believed in a mere 'omen'. This, I admit, is a bold personal reading; and I was relieved when I found that Humphry House, a remarkably objective critic, could go so far along the same exegetic path as to say of the Albatross:

> Thus it images not only its own obvious place in the natural order, but a system of both human and religious values which is declared to have power over the ship and its crew through its connexion with the weather. Furthermore, a function of the bird as a Christian emblem is also hinted at later on, when its corpse is hung round the Mariner's neck 'instead of the cross'.[14]

Certainly, anyone who misses these obvious lights and connexions may be enjoying the poem immensely, but he is reading it at a very elementary level.

The ship now returns towards latitudes of greater comfort, but before it has gone far the Mariner wantonly shoots the Albatross. The absence of explicit motivation seems to have worried Coleridge, for in the Argument to the edition of 1800 he said the Mariner killed the bird "cruelly and in contempt of the laws of hospitality". The reader is free to assume (as I do) that the motive was that gratuitous, sadistic love of power which makes the shooting an act inhospitable, inimical, to the spirit of Christ: here is the atavistic impulse which is almost independent of motive and lies at the root of much human aggressiveness. The Mariner now takes over the function of Cain—of Adam too, according to Mr Warren, [15] who finds in the shooting a suggestion of (among other things) the Fall of Man. If any reader cares to find a more satisfying analogy in the crucifixion of Christ he at least has the warranty that in January 1798 Coleridge was actually preaching "Christ crucified", or rather, re-crucified; and a man like Coleridge could not have done that unless some of the bloody wood of the Cross had entered deep into his soul. Moreover, another reader, Roy Campbell, *seems* to have registered a similar impression:

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[14]Op. cit., p. 97.

[15]*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, with an essay by Robert Penn Warren (New York, 1946).

And Abel's sons the line will cross
under the stretched terrific wings,
the outspread arms (our saving King's)—
the man they made an Albatross.[16]

But the main suggestion is, I think, that the true spirit of Christianity has been banished or outraged:

With my *cross*bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

Without looking for two Shakespearian puns in "*cross*bow", we may still be right in thinking, as Coleridge thought in 1798, that Christians themselves have helped to kill the truth-giving Spirit of Christianity (cf. the "cross of Christ inscribed on banners dripping with human gore" of the Shrewsbury sermon).

Yet even after the killing of this something more than bird, this Spirit of Love and Joy, a special grace, merited perhaps by the initial innocence and spontaneous hospitality of the crew, brings an improvement in the weather (and in this poem 'weather' is always a symbol of some spiritual condition): "The Sun now rose upon the right", i.e. in the East, which happens to be the direction sacred to Christians; but all day the Sun is still "hid in a mist". Though the wind of the Spirit still blows, no "sweet bird" follows. The memory, an impetus, is still there, but the Thing Itself is lacking. And now, in accordance with an old nautical superstition reflecting a deeper archetypal pattern of behaviour, the innocent ones turn against the sinner. The Mariner's words echo their curses:

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe;
For all averred I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! . . .

That curse echoes the simple faith of primitive Christianity, out of which grew the legend of the Wandering Jew.

Then comes a significant change, in both the weather and the mood of the crew:

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist . . .

No more cold, fog, or even mist! The crew responds generously to the new brightness:

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[16] *Mithraic Emblems:* "Mithras Speaks II".

Then all averred I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay, . . .

The formal parallelism of the two stanzas emphasizes, ironically, the complete turn about—a reversal of moral valuation.

The next phase in my tracing of symbolic suggestion may seem to be an unwarranted denigration of certain high humanistic ideals. But although I am sure that Coleridge had the highest respect for the best values of the Renaissance, as I have myself, and would never consciously have besmirched them, the following evocations are for me as valid as they are insistent. By shifting our 'polar' symbols from the personal to the historical plane, we recall that in the early and mediaeval dispensations *asceticism* (cold, ice) and *obscurantism* (fog, mist) had largely prevailed—as an ideal of perfection and a policy of precaution respectively. Then, with the coming of the Renaissance, the new learning and cosmology, the glorious Sun of a new Enlightenment had uprisen—an epoch characterized by the re-emergence of reason, philosophy, science; by the rediscovery of the pleasures of the senses, together with individualism, devil-take-the-hindmost commercialism, nationalism and the cult of power. The spirit of Man (Humanism, anthropocentric and self-reliant; no more vague Biblical promises, but the concrete Reality; less of the Word of Life and more of the Life itself, as the young Peter Grimes insisted) had at last come into its own. Here, surely, was the true Face of God:

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,[17]
The glorious sun uprist . . .

No more would human joy and freedom be dimmed by the bloody Cross and the red glare of Hell ("Away with Crosstianity", cried Bernard Shaw, quite recently). God was now to be manifested in and through Man ("Glory to Man in the Highest", sang Swinburne, not so very long ago).

Although the crew, by their act of condonation, have made themselves "accomplices" in the Mariner's crime, all goes well—for a short period. Because Man seems always living on an overdraft of Divine Grace, the fair breeze continues until the ship reaches the Line, which again marks the fullest rotundity of the world—and worldly values. But in spite of all this happy progress, we know that

[17]Although Mr. Warren finds an ambiguity here, I personally have no doubt that Coleridge intended: 'The glorious Sun rose, not (or, 'no longer') dim or red, but now as bright as God's own head.'

the Albatross lies dead on the deck, and we soon learn that its killing must be expiated:

> We were the first that ever burst
> Into that silent sea.

The "first", because the spiritual experience here symbolized is in the nature of a *primary revelation*, part of an eschatology: "burst", because Man, in his Pelagian zeal, has impetuously overreached himself; "silent", because the wind of the Spirit has stopped blowing, the ship is becalmed, motionless. Coleridge may have remembered that in Dante's *Paradiso* 'motion' is always a symbol of the movement of the soul towards union with God.[18]

The time of retribution has come. Again the Sun's aspect changes: it becomes 'bloody'. The consequences of the second Fall (the rejection of the meek Spirit of Love and Joy) have to be endured. Water, the potable water of Life, which traditionally symbolizes Divine Grace, is now denied to Man, though he is surrounded by a tantalizing expanse of water that is salt, like tears. Above the crew there glowers only a red God—the God that has failed them and who now appears like *Jus Divinum*. The heat and drought symbolize guilt (as in *Job*[19]) and also a state of spiritual and moral stagnation. No wonder that Hopkins, when describing his own sense of guilt and spiritual aridity, echoed the "Water, water everywhere" of Coleridge's parched Mariner:

> I cast for comfort I can no more get
> By groping round my comfortless, than blind
> Eyes in their dark can day *or thirst can find*
> *Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet.*

The "utter drought" and the rotting sea remind us also of *The Waste Land*, and more pointedly, perhaps, of those passages in *Ezekiel* and *Ecclesiastes* from which Mr Eliot drew many of his images. Coleridge might almost have called his poem "The Waste Sea"—or better, "The Scapegoat"; for the Mariner, though he seemed to Wordsworth to be entirely passive, always affects me as the symbol of an *active* principle: he stands for 'leadership' in the ethico-spiritual activity of Man. His initial crime, though its motives are to be inferred, was an act of *arbitrium* or decisive will; later, his self-sacrifice in biting his own arm was both *voluntas* and *arbitrium*, desire *and* decision. The rest of the crew stand in the same relation

[18] See J. S. Carroll: *In Patria* (1911), p. 12.

[19] 24, 19: "Drought and heat consume the snow waters; so doth the grave those which have sinned."

to him as the great majority of mankind stand to the few active intelligences, the few who really shape our destinies, though we ourselves are all personally responsible for our own actions. Hence the Scapegoat complains:

> Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
> Had I from old and young!
> Instead of the cross, the Albatross
> About my neck was hung.

In other words, the emblem of Man's Fall, his Redemption, and his first betrayal of Christ, is replaced by the more immediately reproachful emblem of Christ's *perpetual* betrayal—the continuous rejection of His Holy Spirit of Love and Joy. In 1798 Coleridge was aware that Christian Man had the carcase of a dead ideal hanging round his neck, like a millstone; hence in this stanza the "cross" and the dead "Albatross" always suggest to me, as I think they must have done to Coleridge also (however vaguely), two opposite conditions of the same principle—the live and the dead.

The function of the "bloody Sun" in fostering decay on the sea is parallel to the function of the sun in *Hamlet* (II.ii), where the hero speaks of the sun's breeding maggots in a dead dog and then tells Polonius not to let Ophelia "walk i' the sun." Indeed the very theme of *Hamlet* is that spiritual stagnation and rottenness which Shakespeare saw—confusedly, for he himself was a 'Renaissance man', but at times vividly—as one of the grosser consequences of the decline of the Christian principle—the general Machiavellian realization that pure Christian behaviour was impracticable in a competitive world. In Coleridge's poem I see the red baneful Sun as God's energy functioning through a de-Christianized Humanism or a superficially Christianized secularism; whereas the Moon, under whose subdued light the more benign influences come into play, seems to symbolize that truer Humanism which is a tempered reflection of "God's own head"—an influence which is properly subdued to Man's limited spiritual capacity.

The "spirits" in the poem (taken over from Josephus and the neo-Platonists), together with the spectre ship in Part III, do not lend themselves to any precise symbolic reading, nor do they conflict with my symbolic analogy as a whole. The skeleton ship, suggested to Coleridge by Mr Cruikshank's dream, is part of that melodramatic supernatural machinery which makes the poem a delight to children, and we must be prepared to give the romantic imagination its fling.

Similarly, the avenging Spirit from the Pole, which has been following the ship "nine fathoms deep" as a kind of lurking Nemesis, can be classed with the spectres, and the Two Voices and Angelic Spirits in Part IV, as localized manifestations of the *Jus Divinum*, which moves in many mysterious ways its wonders to perform. I certainly do not regard these spirits as mere free-lance daemons or devils, as some editors assert they are.

The Mariner's one strongly motivated willed action is to bite his own arm and drink his own blood—a "dear ransom" enabling him to free his speech from the bonds of thirst for the general good. This clearly suggests a Christian concept—the redemptive power of self-sacrifice. Christ's Passion (His self-blood-letting) is frequently called his "ransom" paid for Man, and the Mariner's act of self-immolation, though comparatively trivial, is, on the strength of those two words "dear ransom", not unrelated in *kind*. From being an Antichrist he is becoming an *alter Christus*, and this Saul-to-Paul movement is one of the main themes of the poem. The spectres on the skeleton ship, who dice for the Mariner's life, may be compared functionally to the witches in *Macbeth*, and the direct influence of the witch-scenes on the poem is clearly seen in such passages as

> About, about, in reel and rout
> The death-fires danced at night;
> The water, like a witch's oils,
> Burnt green, and blue and white.

The putrefaction of that stagnant sea symbolizes some evil akin to the false values engendered in the witches' hell-broth, with its vile ingredients. Yet though ostensibly macabre and repulsive, the female Life-in-Death and her Death-Mate are, even more clearly than the supernatural creatures in *Macbeth*, divinely appointed agents: the woman stands for Purgatorial Retribution, the other for sheer Death-Damnation. The woman gets the Mariner and her mate takes the crew. Furthermore, the fact that the spectre bark

> drove suddenly
> Betwixt us and the Sun

so that the sun's burning face now peers "as through a dungeon-grate", seems to suggest, on the lines of my analogy, that the baneful sun has been checked. The Mariner, seeing its broad treacherous face flecked with bars, quickly invokes the Virgin Mary for protection—a second sign that he is reverting to an attitude of piety and humility—the state of grace which had been broken by

his callous crime.[20]

The sudden dipping of the sun and rushing out of the stars suggests yet another change in the Mariner's spiritual state—a change that Coleridge would like to have seen in universal Man. He now enters his penitential, purgatorial phase;[21] alone with his sin, he must contemplate his own imperfection and its dire results. Not being Mr Henn elucidating W. B. Yeats, I make no attempt to 'allegorize' the one bright star within the nether tip of the "hornèd Moon", but pass on to note that in the cool moonlight the Mariner's two-hundred shipmates fall dead. In a surface reading this is a 'Gothic' thrill and nothing more, but in the symbolic mode of the poem this mass dying becomes highly significant. The men curse him with their eyes because they blame him for their fate. They are like men who, because of a general spiritual stagnation, realize the dreaded or unexpected moment of death in an agony of bewildered resentment. Their plight is not unlike that of the stricken soldiers in the war-poems of Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Sir Herbert Read; for example:

> the unbearable silence of those who suddenly
> fell sniped
> with mouth open and uncomprehending eyes.[22]

Such poignancy is the fine flower of many, many centuries of Machiavellian policies. Here, the passing of the doomed souls "like the whizz of my crossbow" is an ironic reminder not only of the shooting of the Albatross, but also of what that crime stands for—every unprovoked or selfishly motivated act of violence since that of Cain.

III

The Mariner is now "all, all alone", and his penance suggests the sufferings of a soul in Purgatory. As the Sun comes up again he must "fast in fires", cut off from all normal physical and spiritual consolations:

> So lonely 'twas, that God himself
> Scarce seemed there to be.

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[20]One editor makes the profound comment that "Invocations to the Virgin . . . give an old world atmosphere to the poem"!

[21]It is probably only an interesting coincidence that Dante's *Purgatorio* opens in starlight.

[22]Sir Herbert Read: *Ode: Written during the battle of Dunkirk, May*, 1940, §2.

And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.[23]

Alone with the corruption ("slimy things . . . rotting deck") which his own crime had brought about; feeling himself a part of that corruption and yet despising the creatures of the deadly "calm" (as the gloss ironically calls it), this guilty soul (like Claudius in *Hamlet*) cannot even pray:

Or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

Yet because the Mariner has been provisionally saved from death and damnation, he retains enough 'infused grace' to be able to contrast the general corruption with "the many men so beautiful" whom he has indirectly slain. (So Hamlet, who felt the corruption around him as if he had caused it, yet whose living purgatory was *vicarious*, could contrast that paragon of animals, Man, with Man's own corruptible self — "this quintessence of dust".) That the Mariner's heart has now been touched we see by a remarkable gloss which bears no explicit relation to anything in the text of the poem. Coleridge says he "yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars", the latter being described as if they were redeemed souls entering into their reward:[24] "the stars that still sojourn yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest . . . and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival".

Through the symbol of the Moon (whose intermediary function between the hidden Sun and Man's eye bears a striking resemblance to the missionary and mediatory function of "Christ and his mother and all his hallows" in Christian theology) Divine Power is now made available to the chastened soul as a quasi-mystical insight, nstress, intuitive imagination—what Coleridge was later to call 'Reason". By this light the Mariner perceives the beauty of the vater-snakes—"their beauty and their happiness", as the gloss says.

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[23]Cf. Hopkins's cries from *his* living purgatory:

"cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him who lives, alas, away."

and

"Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?"

[24]As Coleridge well knew, stars are traditional emblems of saints, as in Vaughan, Milton, etc.

Their very presence amid corruption is a sign of that unfailing Providence which, although

Our make and making break, are breaking,
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime,

still sees to it that "There lives the dearest freshness deep down things". This simple natural beauty of contentment is analogous to that simple unworldly piety enjoined in "Consider the lilies of the field" (Consider the water-snakes of the sea); and though the emphasis here is on venerating the principle of life in Creation and not, directly, on taking no care for to-morrow, the outcome is the same—putting our trust in God and not in a quick shot from the hip. To return to the Mariner, the water-snakes cause a spring of love to gush from his heart. As he had formerly shot the Albatross impulsively, so now he blesses the water-creatures "unaware", that is, as the gloss says, "in his heart", which can only mean, through some inflow of special grace. Divine Justice must still be satisfied, but Divine Mercy operates as well:

Sure some kind saint took pity on me
And I blessed them unaware.

It was to obtain this grace that he had invoked the aid of the Virgin Mary ("Heaven's Mother, send us grace!"); and according to Catholic doctrine the saint had interceded, but God had bestowed the favour:

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

The dead letter of a discredited ethic has given way to the rejuvenated principle itself. Therefore Part V begins on a note of thanksgiving marred only by distorted theology:

To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven . . .[25]

IV

As in *The Waste Land*, the ensuing rain is the symbol of Divine Grace. The "daemons" in the poem are apparently inferior to the high angelic powers ("seraph band"), under whose direction they

[25]According to canonical doctrine, the Virgin is the highest Mediatrix: she has no power of her own. Only the Protestant Coleridge and (possibly) a simple Mariner could believe that she "*sent* the gentle sleep . . ."

work out the Will of God. The "polar spirit", which still "requireth vengeance" ("Vengeance is mine", saith the Lord), and the "angelic power" are jointly responsible for carrying the ship in two stages back to English territorial waters, where the natural "meadow-gale of spring" wafts it swiftly and sweetly home to its original harbour.

At line 398 a fellow-daemon is telling another spirit that "penance long and heavy had been accorded" to the Polar Spirit because,

> The spirit who bideth by himself
> In the land of mist and snow,
> *He loved the bird that loved the man*
> *Who shot him with his bow.*

In spite of their ostensible setting in Greek daemonology, I can never read those italicized words without thinking:

> God loved the Son that loved the men
> That nailed Him on the cross.

Once we can think of the Polar Spirit as a function of the *Jus Divinum* (and to regard it as anything *less* robs the poem of symbolic potential), the love-pattern is the same. Christ's plea for mercy ("Father, forgive them . . ."), over against the earlier concept of God the Avenger, has always constituted the central paradox in Christian dogmatic theology—Mastery and Mercy. Romantic Protestantism like Shakespeare's has always tended to stress Mercy at the expense of Justice (e.g. in *Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest*); but the *Jus Divinum* has never been abrogated in any true Christian theology. Hence the Mariner's prolonged penance is quite in keeping with the poem's mediaeval setting and indeed with the unchanged Catholic doctrines of penance and purgatory—penance being both a symbol and a temporal mitigation of the post-mortem retribution.

Why are the dead crew "inspired" by the angelic spirits to work the ship on its homeward passage? For me, as I have said, the crew represent the mass of ordinary humanity, "living and partly living", but especially those who blindly acquiesce in the killing of a harmless Albatross when it suits their own ends, who blindly but (nowadays) with a growing uneasiness acquiesce in Christ's daily crucifixion. Perhaps Mr T. S. Eliot's "stuffed men leaning all together" are first cousins of those dead men who

> All stood together on the deck
> For a charnel-dungeon fitter.

Yet by some grace, and for some inscrutable purpose, a world full of such people (ourselves) still goes on. In terms of material civiliza-

tion this world thrives, as it had begun to do even in 1798, despite the Revolutionary War and the crying social injustices. Coleridge, like all other religious poets, was more concerned with Man's spiritual state than with his physical well-being. The Mariner's mates are apparently all damned; but they evoke some pity—of the kind Baudelaire accorded to the whole "Race de Caïn":

Race de Caïn, ton supplice
Aura-t-il jamais une fin?[26]

The pang and curse, which never left the dead men's eyes, has for me a sharp symbolic significance. A similar sense of betrayed innocence has been a recurrent theme with many modern poets who have dealt with the subject of war—from Hardy to Sir Herbert Read. Men of good will have been led by others, by fear of injury, by weak acquiescence or by a tragic impotence into acts of violence against the Holy Ghost or the Spirit of Man. In *The End of a War* Sir Herbert Read wrote:

Our felt dependence on the ruling few:
the world madness: the wild plunge.

And again in the *Ode* already quoted:

But we who have put our faith
in the goodness of man
and now see man's image debased
lower than the wolf or the dog—
where can we turn for consolation?

This attitude of the sensitive poet towards Man's betrayal by War is part of a larger humanitarian sensibility which recoils from any act or system entailing injury to the meek, innocent or helpless, to the principle of Beauty in a harmless mountain-lion or the potential of Life in underprivileged peoples. Coleridge's Albatross is the emblem of all these victims; and the moral implications of the ultimate triumph of the Albatross in *The Ancient Mariner* are paralleled by similar implications in another passage from *The End of a War*. The English officer is addressing the spirit of ruthless militarism:

once again
the meek inherit the kingdom of God.
No might can win against the wandering
wavering grace of humble men.
You die, in all your power and pride:
I live, in my meekness justified.

[26] *Les Fleurs du Mal:* "Abel et Caïn".

That "wandering wavering grace of humble men" is Sir Herbert Read's "Albatross". It would seem to be one of the mutations of his holy terrible Phoenix,[27] just as the Windhover, fierce bird of prey, is one of the mutations of Hopkins's gentle martyred Christ. War is evil; but war against Evil is godlike.

Something of this precarious poise of terror and peace might have been felt by the Mariner when, the curse expiated, he looked over the ocean and saw little of what was there. Having been delivered from Hell by an uncomprehended Grace, he dare not look behind him

> Because he knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread.

V

The miraculous transit of the ship "faster than human life could endure", the Mariner's supersonic black-out, and the ship's final explosive disintegration or at least scuttling—all these seem to hint (fortuitously, no doubt) at our own possibly penultimate age of fantastic speed and nuclear fission, an age already thinking in terms of space-travel and the last bang. Yet to avoid an anti-climax Coleridge was bound to accelerate the homeward voyage. Moreover, to bring out clearly the essential moral, religious, eschatological theme of the poem, he was more or less obliged to use apocalyptic signs and wonders. At the same time he had to provide for a transition from the supernatural to the simple everyday pieties among which the Mariner had to spend the rest of his days on earth—as a soul on ticket-of-leave, so to speak, from Purgatory. This theme of rehabilitation comes first. By the serene light of the Moon, the Mariner rediscovers the familiar landmarks—the lighthouse top, the hill, the kirk standing, significantly, "above a rock" ("Upon this rock will I build My Church")—and he is overcome with emotion:

> O let me be awake, my God!
> Or let me sleep alway.

Then comes the supreme moment of revelation. Over each of the now prone dead bodies an angelic spirit stands up in its own light

[27] Cf.
> Beauty, truth and rarity
> Grace in all simplicity
> Here enclosed in cinders lie.
> (*Mutations of the Phoenix*, 1—3)

and

> . . . and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
> Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.
> (*The Windhover*, 13—14)

and signals to the shore; it is almost an annunciation:

> This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
> No voice did they impart—
> No voice; but oh! the silence sank
> Like music on my heart.

The intense relief felt by the Mariner on seeing this "heavenly sight" need not imply that he regards the seraphs as the redeemed souls of his dead shipmates (for as line 507 suggests, their corpses were still a reproach to him); but this vision must have seemed like a promise—of Redemption and Resurrection, the reunification of the glorified body with the purged soul.

By symbolic suggestion the rest of the poem is the story of a man who, having survived a spiritual voyage into the existential realms of self-assertion, self-realization and self-annihilation, has now returned, shattered but chastened, to the simple traditional assurances—the "Hermit good" to absolve his sin, the Kirk to remind him of his now total submission to God. From the moment his redemption had begun, the peace he desired had been symbolized by the sounds of rural nature—bird-song, the sound of a hidden brook, the meadow-gale of spring. The Hermit, like the one mentioned in *Tintern Abbey*, lives humbly, close to nature, in a wood:

> He kneels at morn, at noon, and eve—
> He hath a cushion plump:
> It is the moss that wholly hides
> The rotted old oak-stump.

The Wordsworthian "natural piety" is reinforced by prayer and the sacraments, as they were to be again in the poetry of Hopkins and Roy Campbell.

The 'Gothic' device for getting rid of the ship, that vehicle of the Mariner's regenerative experience, his dream-journey through Hell and Purgatory, is vaguely reminiscent of those Biblical climacteric commotions—the whirlwind and thundering Voice in *Job*, the earthquake and rending of the Veil in the Temple, Christ's account of His Second Coming, the Pentecostal initiation. The sinking under his feet of the old husk of his past links the event with the conversions of Saul and Augustine of Hippo, while the gift of tongues and the missionary wanderings of the disciples are clearly suggested when the Mariner says to the Hermit:

> I pass, like night, from land to land;
> I have strange powers of speech; . . .

Why "like night"? Because outwardly he is a mysterious, night-

mare-racked figure; but as a symbol the simile suggests to me that with him, as with the first apostles, the preaching of "Christ crucified" and the doctrine of "love and reverence to all things God made" is, in a world governed largely by material interests, almost a subversive activity: his tale must be taught only to those who, like the Wedding Guest, will take it to heart, not mock at it or have the teacher rushed off to a prison or asylum. The Pilot's boy who thought the Mariner a devil, the Pilot who was afraid, the Hermit who was cautious, the Wedding-Guest who was at first impatient—all these are types of the ordinary man to whom the experiential physiognomy of a Dante, a Lear, a Swift, a Baudelaire or a Hopkins are incomprehensible, terrifying and irrelevant. Moreover, the Mariner is a symbol of the benevolent crank and itinerant preacher that Coleridge himself was for a time. We see these men in our public squares, addressing a bus queue, two small boys and a sparrow. Every true poet has one as a 'familiar'; most of us have one inside us, securely trussed up.

The explicit 'moral' introduced at line 610 is really supererogatory —except at class-room level, where it is handy for over-worked teachers. Yet it is not extraneous or out of key, for, as Humphry House pointed out:

> Coming in context, after the richness and terror of the poem, it is no more a banal apophthegm, but a moral which has its meaning *because it has been lived.*

VI

By way of epilogue we may note that both Baudelaire and Roy Campbell treated the de-skied Albatross as a symbol of their own inspired but misunderstood poetic selves. Yet neither poet could confidently retain the fiction that the Poet-Albatross was more important than the Christ-Albatross. True, Campbell shot many quarrels at the enemies of Christ, and Baudelaire could speak of "Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché"; but a strain of vindictiveness in the one, and the perverse blasphemies of the other, kept them both close (as perhaps most of us are) to the unreformed Mariner. But the powerful and sublimal influence of *The Ancient Mariner* on modern poets is well illustrated in Anthony Delius's *A Walk in the Dark*, the love poem from which the second motto to this essay is taken. We all desire just that—something between the icy purity of absolute asceticism and the dangerous heat and drought of a complete abandonment to sensual and materialistic values.

COLERIDGE AND THE COMMUNICATION OF POLITICAL TRUTH

J. A. COLMER

ALTHOUGH Coleridge's political philosophy has received its due measure of attention, his work as a critic of contemporary political and social problems has been largely overlooked. The main stages in the development of his political theory have been charted, his debt to others assessed, and his influence on the thought of the nineteenth century traced, but his continuous preoccupation with a group of problems connected with the relationship of the political writer with his public and with the State has been ignored. This is curious, more especially since a number of essays and long passages are devoted to a detailed discussion of these complex relations and to laying down the principles that should guide those who sought to effect social change through the written and spoken word. Behind the somewhat unconventional methods used in publishing *The Watchman*, *The Friend*, and the two *Lay Sermons* lay not mere personal eccentricity, but a serious attempt to solve some of the problems involved in the communication of political ideas. The most important of these were: What were the best methods of bringing about the illumination that must precede reform? How could a writer prevent his words from inflaming the passions of the ignorant multitude? To whom should the critic of society address himself? How much freedom should the State allow the critic of its policies and institutions?

The most thorough treatment of the subject is found in *The Friend* where a long essay entitled *On the Communication of Truth and the Rightful Liberty of the Press in Connection with it* extended from the third number, 10 August 1809, to the sixth, 21 September. There is an earlier and much briefer treatment in the political lectures delivered at Bristol in 1795 and published in pamphlet form under the separate titles, *Conciones ad Populum* and *The Plot Discovered*. Between the years 1799 and 1802, as an occasional leader-writer for the *Morning Post*, Coleridge discussed the function of the press at frequent intervals, and one of his early leaders, *Advice to the Friends of Freedom*, 12 December 1799, returned to the theme of the first Bristol lecture and sought to determine how the true friends of

liberty should conduct themselves. In later years, in the *Letters to Judge Fletcher*, which were printed in the *Courier* in 1814, and in the second *Lay Sermon* he reflected bitterly on the methods of communicating political ideas employed by popular demagogues and journalists like Hunt and Cobbett. A large number of jottings in the *Note-Books* also indicate his continuous concern with the duties and responsibilities of the critic of society.

In November 1795 when Coleridge lectured in Bristol and attacked the two Bills to restrict freedom of expression and of public assembly, he was acting in the true dissenting tradition when he claimed that "to promulgate what we believe to be the truth is indeed a law beyond law." He contended that it was the privilege of the Englishman "to entertain what speculative opinions he pleases, provided he stir up no present action." But once a view is promulgated it moves out of the sphere of private speculation into one in which it becomes potentially suasive and therefore capable of instigating action. At least once in the Bristol lectures Coleridge seems to have recognized this, for he warns his audience of the necessity of considering the possible effect of one's words before speaking. "We certainly should never attempt to make proselytes by appeals to selfish feeling—and consequently, should plead *for* the oppressed, not *to* them." In spite of this qualification it is clear that during his early brief "career of sedition" he thought more about truth than political expediency, and it was not until 1809, in *The Friend*, that he drew the important distinction between natural and civil rights, and came to recognize and accept, with all its complex implications, the principle that "words are moral acts, and words deliberately made public the law considers in the same light as any other cognizable overt-act."[1]

In *The Friend* Coleridge distinguished between mere verbal accuracy, as practised by Blifil in *Tom Jones*, and moral truth where the speaker's intention is to convey "an adequate notion of the thing spoken of, when it is practicable; but at all events a right notion, or none at all." A schoolmaster teaching arithmetic conveys a right notion, where the adequate notion, involving knowledge of higher mathematics, is beyond his pupils' grasp. A man is justified in communicating an inadequate notion, provided that his intentions are honest and that he is satisfied that no serious error will arise from imperfect understanding of his words; but he must refrain from the attempt where ignorance and predominant passions, among

[1] S. T. Coleridge, *The Friend* ed. H. N. Coleridge (London, Bohn's, 1865), p. 43.

those who receive his words, are likely to vitiate the truth. For a writer the difficulty of knowing who his readers would be might be overcome if he has

> clearly and rightly established in his own mind the class of readers, to which he means to address his communications; and if both in this choice, and in the particulars of the manner and matter of his work, he conscientiously observe all the conditions which reason and conscience have shown to dictate, in relation to those for whom the work was designed.[2]

Heterodox views and original ideas, conveyed with due seriousness and in a manner which forced the reader to think deeply, would be unlikely to fall into the wrong hands.

Thus, for the individual, "conscience or effective reason" is the sole arbiter of truth; but the State has no such guide to its relations with an author. "Every depository of supreme power must consider itself rightful," and the State must act on the principle of self-preservation, preventing seditious libel without restricting the constructive work of the critic of society. How? Not by state licensing of books, which Coleridge dismisses as undesirable and impracticable. He thought that the State should act only after publication, and in deciding whether words were seditious or not due allowance should be given for virtuous intention; for,

> it is to the press that we owe the gradual ascendancy of those wise political maxims, which casting philosophical truth in the moulds of national laws, customs, and existing orders of society, subverted the tyranny without suspecting the government.[3]

Thus the series of articles that had appeared in the *Morning Post* during the Peace of Amiens, many by Coleridge himself, could be excused by their virtuous intention, though "not a paragraph warning the nation, as need was and as most imperious duty commanded, of the perilous designs and unsleeping ambition of our neighbour, the mimic and caricaturist of Charlemagne, but was punishable libel". But the compilers of a selection of inflammatory paragraphs from the prose works of Milton, which Coleridge found being read as a sixpenny pamphlet by factory workers, were clearly trying to subvert the allegiance of the ignorant and uneducated labourers.

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[2]Coleridge, *The Friend*, p. 30.

[3]Coleridge, *The Friend*, p. 45.

Coleridge deplored the existence of such large-scale ignorance, and hoped for the time when the rational spirit of freedom would be nation-wide with "the consequent influence and control of public opinion, and its most precious organ, the jury". When Coleridge wrote this it was the jury which—by the Fox Act of 1792—had to decide whether or not a work was libellous; but the judge could withhold this newly granted power from the jury, which was in any case often very carefully hand-picked, and might know little of the laws governing the issue. It was of the utmost importance, asserted Coleridge, that the jury should realize that "the degree, the circumstance, and the intention, consititute (not merely modify) the offence". The leading principle on which judgment should rest was the connexion the work might have with overt acts, and it should be remembered that, whereas the overt acts that might follow from a libel on the government—for example, the attempt to put Tom Paine's theories into practice—would be far more serious than anything that could be caused by a libel on an individual, the likelihood that such theories would lead to seditious overt acts was relatively small.

To what extent, it may be asked, do the principles formulated in *The Friend* correspond with Coleridge's theory and practice throughout his life? In the early years, from 1795 to 1802, he was actively engaged in the task of eradicating political ignorance. Though acutely aware of the danger of inflaming the passions of the ignorant, he nevertheless set out to address his remarks to a fairly wide public; and he regarded the Bristol lectures, *The Watchman*, and particularly the essays in the *Morning Post* as important contributions to the education of the people. As long as he bore in mind the lesson that he impressed on those who came to hear his first political lecture in Bristol, that the French Revolution proved that "the knowledge of the few cannot counteract the ignorance of the many", he felt compelled to contribute to the education of the nation at large. But after his return from Malta in 1806, he seemed content to entrust its moral and political education to the monitorial system devised by Andrew Bell, "this incomparable machine, this vast moral steam-engine", as he called it in *The Statesman's Manual*, though he fully admitted that it alone could not constitute an efficient system of national education, and that, in any case, the education of the lower classes was dependent on a "more manly discipline of intellect on the part of the learned." [4] In later life he

[4] Coleridge, *Lay Sermons* (London, 1852), p. 46.

addressed his remarks exclusively to the upper and middle classes, and regarded Cobbett and Hunt as the enemies, not the friends, of the people. On the one hand their writings imperilled the safety of the State, and on the other their mode of addressing their chosen public tended to debase human nature. In 1817 he wrote to Street, the editor of the *Courier*, that he entertained "a feeling more like hatred" towards such men than he ever "bore to other Flesh and Blood". Their activities must end in "the Suspension of Freedom of all kinds", he prophesied. "Hateful under all names, these wretches are most hateful to me as Liberticides." At the same time he remarked on the moral debasement involved in one of his *Note-Books*. "The Cobbetts and Hunts address you (the Lower Ranks) as beasts who have no future selves—as if, by a natural necessity, you must remain poor and starving." Although he misjudged Cobbett, he was on sure ground when he suggested that the methods employed by most of the radical orators and writers of his day left the ignorance of the people untouched; and as he had remarked to Lady Beaumont during the composition of *The Friend* "any knowledge which leaves men ignorant of their ignorance tends to increase that ignorance."

Some light is thrown on Coleridge's personal dilemma by a comment recorded in *Note-Book No. 27*. On 28 April 1818, a tinker whom he met outside a baker's shop in Highgate summed up the national situation by saying "the rich won't part with anything and the poor have nothing to part with." "What is the present state?" Coleridge asked himself.

> Great oppression on the part of the Rich . . . . on the part of the Poor clubbing, debauchery, sedition. How shall an honest man act? If he exposes the former wickedness, he appears to address, and is in actual danger of feeding, the latter.

His own practical solution was to restrict his remarks to the oppressors, though he did not refer to them as such in public. He thereby hoped to avoid the danger of feeding popular discontents, and believed that he could effect necessary social reform by arousing a new social consciousness in the mind of the rich. The sub-title of the two *Lay Sermons*, the first "addressed to the Higher Classes of Society", and the second to the "Higher and Middle Classes on the existing Distresses and Discontents", and the style of all his later works, illustrate the principle of conscious and deliberate limitation of his audience that he had enunciated in the early essays in *The*

Friend. Thus far, theory was carried into practice, but behind these works can be detected an anxious, frightened and disillusioned man; the self-imposed limitation of audience prevented him from ever speaking out; every statement is hedged round with qualifications, and rather than run the risk of being misunderstood, he preferred to go unread.

For the situation, in which the critic found himself unable to comment frankly on public affairs, Coleridge blamed the "Reading Public", a phrase he used to describe the middle class readers, whose chief literary diet consisted of novels borrowed from the circulating libraries, and of miscellaneous items read in the periodical press. Its members had learned to read, but not to think. Its existence made it impossible for anyone to publish original ideas on controversial topics. "At length it will scarcely be possible for the State to suffer any truth to be published", he wrote to Street, "because it will be certain to convey dangerous falsehood to ninety-nine out of a hundred." Coleridge was one of the first writers to draw attention to the existence of this new class of reader and to anticipate the dangers involved in the rapidity of its growth, but he did nothing to contribute to its education. He could not associate himself with any kind of "plebification of knowledge", and left it to the philosophical radicals and the founders of the mechanic's institutes to educate—*instruct* was the appropriate word according to Coleridge—the lower orders of society.

Clearly it was not easy to find the best way of disseminating new ideas about society and government. Coleridge early rejected the methods of the corresponding societies, and became equally critical of Godwin's view that truth would permeate society by a natural gradation, because it took insufficient note of the almost unbridgeable gulf that separated "the Nobility, Gentry, and People of Dress",—a phrase that had caught his eye in a perfumer's advertisement—from the working class. In later life, however, he equivocated. His own acute social and economic analysis in the *Lay Sermons* indicated that the old rigid class structure was disintegrating, yet he continued to classify his readers according to that outmoded scheme. More realistic, though apparently an archaism, was the revival of the phrase *ad clerum* in *The Statesman's Manual* to indicate the nature of his chosen audience. It was in fact to the "clerisy", a cultural and not a class group, that he addressed his later works. But were these chosen readers sufficiently habituated to referring all questions to principles? He feared not. On 7 February

1829 he complained in his *Note-Book* of the difficulties that faced him in writing *Church and State*.

> Alas I have to address men who have never distinctly or consciously referred their opinions to Principles, much less traced the several steps of the ascent, and yet in order to produce any *effect*, to make any immediate and general impression, I must state such positions only and urge only such arguments, as the Reader or Hearer will immediately see the full force of and recognize as a previous judgement of his own. In short, I dare not pretend to inform, instruct, or guide. I must not call on them to repeat for themselves a process of reflection which I had gone thr', tho' facilitated for him by laying before him the Facts, Documents and authorities, requisite for the grounds, proofs or illustration of Reasoning.[5].

To effect his purpose it was essential that his reader should be made to think. His method of political education involved the development of a new kind of political consciousness. He wanted, he said, "not so much to show my reader this or that Fact, as to kindle his own Torch for Him". In this respect there is a close resemblance between the political and philosophical writings. But in any age few will be prepared to undertake the severe mental and spiritual exercise which the method involves. Coleridge realized this, but was undismayed:

> The Public, indeed, have given no heed; but if only ten minds have been awakened by my writings the intensity of the Benefit may well compensate for the narrowness of extension.[6]

In the case of *Church and State* he undoubtedly exaggerated his difficulties, for the members of the professional classes who formed his chosen public had received an education in which at least some regard had been paid to principles. The work proved a success; it passed through two editions in the first year and made a profound impression on Thomas Arnold, the young Gladstone, and other distinguished Victorians. Coleridge had reaped the benefit of using a recognized literary form, the academic treatise, for communicating original ideas on a controversial subject. In using the essay form in *The Watchman* and in *The Friend* he had aroused expectations in his readers that he was incapable of satisfying, while in the *Lay Sermons* the choice of form allowed too wide a scope to his discursive genius. His need to make money through journalism and his

[5]Coleridge, *Note-Book* 38, f. 25.
[6]Coleridge, *Note-Book* 49, f. 14v.

earnest desire to reform society led him often to write for the many, while his fear of feeding Jacobinism and his belief in an intellectual aristocracy convinced him that he should write only for the few. Here lies the central ambivalence of Coleridge's position, and the tensions are evident in all his political writings.

If it be asked, then, what final solutions Coleridge offered to the main problems involved in the communication of political truth the answer would seem to be this. On the subject of the education of the people for citizenship, he came to the conclusion that it could not be brought about by political writers, though he admitted that a responsible national press had much to contribute; it must be left to the Bell monitorial system and the permeative influence of the clerisy. The best precaution to take to prevent the passions of the multitude from being inflamed was to abstain from addressing the lower classes altogether. The writer should address himself to the upper and middle classes, and particularly to the professional classes that constitute the clerisy. But what of the monstrous cultural wen, the "Reading Public"? Coleridge recognized that the education given to the lower and middle classes would at best enlarge its size, and thus increase, and not diminish, the difficulties confronting the serious writer and the State. The risk that original ideas would be transformed into sedition would make it more difficult than ever for the State to adopt a liberal attitude towards its policies and institutions; yet he believed that it should continue to allow the writer the greatest freedom compatible with its self-preservation. He himself had nothing to fear. Apart from the note of caution struck in all his later works, the intrinsic difficulty of the thought, and the complex involutions of his prose style, were sufficient to frighten away the members of the 'Reading Public', and all potential subverters of the social order. It is one of Coleridge's notable achievements that he saw the dangers involved in the rapid emergence of this new class of reader; but it was a personal tragedy that this awareness drove him to adopt so conscientious and rigid a limitation of his public.

SOME REMARKS ON MARLOWE'S FAUSTUS

MARTIN VERSFELD

THE question of the relation of philosophy to the humanities has exercised me for many years. With the passing of time, however, I become less and less well disposed towards generalities, so that it appears to me that if I wish to convince anybody of the need of philosophical knowledge for appreciating literature it will be best to analyse a concrete instance of the impact of philosophy, and, in this instance, theology, upon a poet's work. I wish to make some remarks about Marlowe's *Faustus*.

The Tragicall History of D. Faustus was probably written by Marlowe shortly after he left Cambridge. To understand it, it is essential to remember that it was written by a student of theology at a University in which the medieval tradition was alive. Further, it is not enough to remember *that* he studied theology, but one must also know *what* he is likely to have learned in the course of his studies. Besides studying literature, and patristic and scholastic theology, he must have studied scholastic metaphysics. Without venturing too far in the direction of extracting autobiography from the *Tragicall History*, one can venture to indicate that the experience uttered in the play is felt and presented in terms of the conceptions acquired in the course of his studies.

I shall concentrate here upon the philosophical and theological conceptions, and this requires, of course, some sympathy with these. Not all commentators possess it. For instance, the late Professor Ellis-Fermor, in her *Christopher Marlowe*, refers to his "tutelage to an empty and unreal mental discipline" and elsewhere to "gloomy theology", by which she appears to mean traditional Christian teaching, contrasted unfavourably, as a "dogmatic system", with "a pagan simplicity of outlook".

This may relieve one's feelings, but it butters no other parsnips. Marlowe may or may not have revolted against his scholastic education; but, like Descartes, he had to express his experience in in terms of it; and if we wish to understand the experience, then we had better understand the terms.

I am not going to raise the question of the degree to which Marlowe identified himself with Faustus, or whether he is translating some personal downfall into terms of drama. We shall stick to Faustus

and the course of his downfall is succinctly stated in the Prologue. Faustus was

> grac't with Doctors name
> Excelling all, whose sweete delight disputes
> In heavenly matters of *Theologie*,
> Till swolne with cunning of a selfe conceit,
> His waxen wings did mount above his reach.

Having been cast down by heaven he finds delight in "cursed necromancy".

Let us observe first that Faustus did not find theology gloomy. On the contrary, he found a sweet delight in it. Aquinas, as Marlowe probably knew, defined theology as *scientia divino lumine cognoscibilium*. The traditional conception of theology was that it had to do with God and the works of God regarded *sub specie Deitatis;* and further that, since it depended on the acceptance of revelation, it required grace for its pursuit. It is the inchoation of participation in the divine self-knowledge. That is why Descartes says that to pursue theology "there was need of some special help from heaven, and of being more than man".

That there are some curious overtones in Descartes's statement need not concern us here. The point to grasp is that if Faustus found a sweet delight in theology, it was because, apprehending God and things under the formality proper to revealed theology, he was participating in the divine joy in being. The text gives us no reason to suppose that his sweet delight was merely eristic. We have to do with a fallen theologian, *formaliter dictum*.

Let us next observe that theological knowledge is represented as the *cause* of his fall. Like Icarus he fell through pride. Through *hubris*, he had got his wings singed. To understand this we must understand the treatment of pride in the moral theology which was a commonplace to the men of Marlowe's time. Augustine prefaces his treatment of the fall in *de Civitate Dei* with an exposition of the principles of hierarchy. Creation is by a gratuitous act of the divine love, which establishes a descending scale of natures expressing, by their position in the scale, the will and the love of God. In the creatures there is a likeness to God that becomes more explicit as we go up the scale. Men and angels are more like God than stones and animals, because they possess intelligence and will, powers by which they are to hold themselves in place by actively responding to the will of God in creation. Humility is the act by which we consent to the hierarchy. It would be wrong and prideful for a man to

wish to be a dog or stone or an angel or even another man. This is true *mutatis mutandis* for an angel. To fall is to will ourselves out of our position in the hierarchy.

We can study the process very well in Vondel's *Lucifer*. The play opens with Appolyon returning to Beelzebub after descending to observe the state of Adam and Eve in the newly created Paradise. Appolyon reports how beautiful the earthly Paradise is. The angels could envy it.

Mens zou ons Paradys om Adam's hof verwensen.
't Geluk der Engelen moet wyken voor de mensen.

Invidia is at work. Further Appolyon witnesses the first happy marriage act between Adam and Eve. He admits that he burnt his feathers. Here is a joy which a disembodied spirit cannot share. He'd like to be in Adam's place.

Here then is an angel who wishes not to be an angel. He does not will the divine hierarchy. Immediately Appolyon and Beelzebub begin to feel insecure about their position, and having wanted to sink lower, they now want to rise higher. They feel that they will have to make unwonted efforts to maintain their dignity. They are threatened by man. In fact, they are becoming ripe for rebellion against God, because they are no longer sure of the wisdom of His Will.

Vondel makes use of the patristic suggestion that the angels fell because, given a preview of the Incarnation, some of them took the association of the Godhead with flesh as a slight upon the angelic dignity. The Nemesis of contemning the flesh illicitly is to desire it illicitly.

In Augustine's version of the Fall, which sticks close to Genesis, corruption proceeds from above downwards. It is not matter which is the principle of evil, but the angelic will. It is precisely because of their likeness to God that the angels fall. They are sufficiently like God to be dazzled by their own light. They are Luciferentes to such a degree that they are able to be tempted to mistake the image for the original. One might say that they are tempted by their very creation, as something inherent in the ontological order.

The relevance of all this to our Prologue is this. The angels are theologians in the sense that they possess the *logos* of God in the fullest way possible to a created nature. That is what their light consists in, and that is why Augustine calls them contemplators in the proper sense of mysticism. Their fall consists in their mistaking themselves for the Logos, that is, pretending to the wisdom of God.

The devil is the mystic *manqué*. He wishes to be more than angel, and his damnation is to be deprived of the original light. "To be alienated from the life of God", says Augustine, ". . . . would be a punishment so great that, supposing it to be eternal, no torments that we know of . . . . could be compared with it." It is this patristic teaching that Marlowe recalls when he makes Mephistopheles say

> Thinkst thou that I who saw the face of God,
> And tasted the eternal joyes of heaven,
> Am not tormented with ten thousand hels,
> In being depriv'd of everlasting blisse?

The principle involved is this, that the greater the light the more dangerous the chance of burning. It is just because the pursuit of theology is the sweetest of human pursuits that the theologian stands in peculiar danger of spiritual pride. Because it is that science by which man stands nearest to the angels, it is that by which he stands nearest to the diabolic temptation. Because by grace he is more than man, he may think that he is by nature more than man, and claim for himself what belongs properly to God. It is precisely theology which puts Faustus in the devil's grip.

The Prologue goes on to tell us that for theology Faustus substitutes "cursed necromancy". The Nemesis of getting above himself is that he turns from the living God to dead bodies. What he wishes now is the "metaphysics of magicians", and what we have to do is to try to understand what Marlowe must have meant by such a phrase. The metaphysics that Faustus has deserted for the books of the magicians is scholastic metaphysics. He takes leave of it with the words "bid oncaymeon farewell". 'Oncaymeon' is, of course, the Greek *on kai me on*, the question of being and non-being, and is meant to recall the Aristotelian and Thomist conception of metaphysics as the science of being, *qua* being. Now the central principle of that metaphysic is the principle of identity, A is A. God is God, being is being and not non-being, this pencil is this pencil, Helen is Helen, and a dead Helen is not a live Helen. Even the niece of King Gorboduc knew that. To wish it otherwise was to revolt against the nature of things, which was to be what and where God made them. To be Faustus, ergo, is to be a man; but Faustus wishes to be more than man. Therefore he must take leave of the nature of things.

To bring out all the implications of the principle of identity would involve nothing less than the corpus of medieval philosophy itself.

For instance, the rational proofs of the existence of God rest upon it, and so does the *analogia entis*. It ties up with the Augustinian ideas of hierarchy in this way, that to have its own place a thing must have its own *esse*. It is the philosophical foundation for the contemplative attitude to reality, as the ascent of the mind to that which is, and for the Franciscan delight in creatures as standing out, ex-sisting, by their own proper *esse*, against the not-being from which God has evoked them by His Word.

The sin of Faustus is that he will not let things be. He has broken with contemplation. He does not wish to admit the authority of created order and therefore of things over his mind. He wishes to assert authority over things. He does not wish to know things but to change them, or rather, to know them in a manner which will facilitate domination. The plays of Marlowe rest firmly on the traditional treatment by the medieval theologians of the three *cupidines*, namely, *sciendi*, *dominandi*, and *sentiendi*, and this treatment rests on Augustine's doctrine of the *amor concupiscentiae*. All the indications are that Marlowe did not find this teaching empty and unreal. It is the stuff of his plays.

The consequences of bidding 'oncaymeon' farewell soon become apparent in the first monologue. What are the reasons which Faustus here gives for breaking with divinity? According to Jerome's Bible, he argues

> All men are sinners
> Every sinner must die an everlasting death
> Therefore Faustus must die an everlasting death.

The argument holds if Faustus is a man. "*Che sera, sera*, What will be, shall be." Divinity adieu. Divinity to God. But if Faustus is a god, what book shall take the place of Jerome's Bible?

Let us observe that with the words *che sera, sera*, Faustus is rejecting the whole doctrine of the redemption, and rejecting it on the grounds of an abstract logic. Now what is very interesting is that his rejection rests on a logicizing of the principle of identity. *Che sera, sera* is an expression of fatalism, resting on the taking of the principle under the formality of logic, and not of metaphysics. What is expressed is a timeless necessity. It is because we have prescinded from history, and are not working within the existential logic of history that the possibility of redemption is excluded. For the moment Faust is a Spinozist. Let us remark that idealism inevitably ends with the apotheosis of man.

It is to be remembered that Aquinas used the principle of identity

to prove that even the omnipotence of God could not bring it about that what was past was not past, for instance, to bring it about that Socrates had not been poisoned. It is metaphysically impossible. By the circumstances of his education Marlowe must have heard of the argument.[1] Faustus twists it round so as to give future events a *logical* necessity. God cannot bring it about that I shall not be damned. He has already opted for despair. Logic has annihilated the 'time' of redemption.

Immediately after rejecting the religion of the book, Jerome's Bible, that is, a religion of concepts which leads to despair of salvation, Faustus makes a leap into magic. He will rely on other books.

> These Metaphisikes of Magicians,
> And Negromantike bookes are heavenly

Having decided that what must be must be, he decides to resort to necromancy, by the power of which what has been shall be, as though it were present. Further, he wishes by magic to control nature.

> Be thou on earth as Jove is in the skie,

The argument from Jerome's Bible holds if he is a man. But this is what dissatisfies him. That Faustus is Faustus and a man is what he cannot tolerate.

This is led up to by inexorable steps in the verse. Faustus is a logician. He does not wish to be one. He is a metaphysician, a doctor, a divine. He is dissatisfied with these pursuits.[2] Finally he is a man. Not only the *habitus* but the substance must be discarded. Here, too, identity as a principle of *being* must be suspended. This is to opt for hell. One can say that hell is the place where the principle of identity does not hold, and that is only another way of saying that it is no place. That is why Mephistopheles can say that hell is not anywhere. It is simply the *absence* of God here and now, the presence of non-being.

Let us turn our attention from the nature of metaphysics to that of magic. The men of Marlowe's time and education got their ideas on the matter largely from Augustine and the Neo-Platonists. For Augustine, it is the essence of magic to be a misappropriation arising from idolatry, where idolatry is defined as the putting of a

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[1]Valdes tells Faustus to get back to Albertus's works.

[2]When Faustus says "ubi desinit philosophus, ibi incipit medicus", the *inceptio* is to be understood materially and not formally. Having done with philosophy we are now turning to the study of corpses.

creature in the place of God. Augustine's position here again rests on the notion of hierarchy. Creation is a graded scale. Men may *use* beings less than men, for instance, animals for food, but at no point is exploitation permissible. Our relations to beings are governed by the fact that their very substance is to image their divine creator; hence nothing is to be used but in praise of God. Exploitation commences when, the image being substituted for the original, that is, the *amor concupiscentiae* having supplanted the *amor Dei*, men see nothing in things but a means to enhance their own egos. Magic commences when we try to use superior beings, the spirits, for our self-centred purposes, and when we harness the Word of Power itself for our own satisfaction and exaltation. Ultimately, then, magic is blasphemy in the interests of lust.

Like Descartes, then, but by means of magic and not of mathematics, Faustus wishes to become the master and possessor of nature. But first he must substitute the image for the original. He must say, yes, to the question: Is not thy soul thine own? That is the fundamental step in a metaphysics that is not realist but magical. To subdue the universe to man, man must first misappropriate himself. "A sound Magician is a mighty god." Humility as a fundamental metaphysical attitude in the face of being is itself to become a mere ruse.

> How pliant is this Mephistophelis?
> Full of obedience and humilitie,
> Such is the force of Magicke and my spels,

Having surrendered the power to *give* his own being, which is the same as the power to accept it in its subordination to the created order, Faustus becomes incapable of giving and acceptance in love. He must misappropriate women, use them as the instruments of his lust.

> Marriage is but a ceremoniall toy,
> And if thou lovest me, think no more of it.
> Ile cull thee out, the fairest curtezans,
> And bring them evry morning to thy bed,

Having called his soul his own, he must, like Vondel's Appolyon, sink to bodies. He must misappropriate realities by reducing them to bodies, as Hobbes was to do in the grand manner. Magic as appropriation is now seen as a kind of fornication with being. Hence the frequent Old Testament denunciations of idolatry as fornication. To commit idolatry is to forget that this is a created and given universe; and its root is the pride by which Adam sough

to appropriate the wisdom, or Logos or Word of God, as his own.

One of the most interesting things in the *Tragicall History* is the treatment of time. I have already suggested this. Time in Augustinian and Scholastic thought is existentially or concretely understood. Time is the procession of created things from and to God, history in its full concreteness, with the Incarnation and Redemption revealing what is its ultimate metaphysical structure. The will to misappropriate reality must therefore reveal itself as a will to interfere with time. Philosophically this requires that we should treat time as a logical abstraction, even a subjective form in intuition, by means of which we can arrange, control and appropriate things. Faustus wishes by magic to control history, not only in the Marxian sense, which achieves its end by the reduction of history to process, but by wishing to have at his disposal what is past by the aid of necromancy.[3] He feels wanton and lascivious, and what is called up for his gratification is the simulacrum of Helen of Troy. His reality is becoming the projection of his own lasciviousness, and what is happening is not a dominating by his godlike mind, but the domination of the latter by the passions and the bodies which he set out to control. In the words of Augustine, exaltation leads to dejection.

Marlowe lived during a necromantic attempt to raise the shades of a classical past, and in his way he appears to have been aware of what was happening. Tricks were being played with time, and the notion of created time was giving place to the notion of mathematical time. The times were getting out of joint. I should like to suggest in passing that very interesting facets in *Hamlet* would be revealed by examining the implications for the structure of time of the introduction of the ghost. Hamlet, too, is concerned with the problem of time to repent. But to get back to Faustus, Mephistopheles is willing to explain the movements of the celestial bodies.

> As are the elements, such are the spheares,
> Mutually folded in each other's orbe,
> And Faustus,
> All iointly move upon one axletree.

He is entirely at home in a world of process, but he cannot tolerate a universe which is an analogical procession.

> Faust. . . . . tell me who made the world?
> Meph. I will not.

[3]Historical materialism is necromancy in reverse, an effort to control *future* beings.

Faust. Sweete Mephastophilus, tell me.
Meph. Move me not, for I will not tell thee.
Faust. Villain, have I not bound thee to tell me any thing?
Meph. I, that is not against our kingdome, but this is,

It is time that catches Faustus out, and when the false eternities of necromantic bliss have failed him,[4] he calls out:

Stand stil you ever mooving spheres of heaven,
That times may cease, and midnight never come.

To anybody acquainted with Scholastic philosophy his words immediately evoke the Christian adaptation of Aristotle, according to which time is the mode of existence of contingent beings, contingent because they are created. 'Oncaymeon' is back again, but back as an avenger. A time that stood still would be an absurdity in the scholastic sense in which a square circle would be an absurdity. It would not obey the principle of identity. It is one of the things to which the power of God does not extend. Faustus wants to be fixed in his condition, being and not being. He is calling hell upon himself, which, as Mephistopheles has already explained, is the here and now as absolutely absurd and meaningless. Even God cannot save him now, *because* he is desperate.

What he really wants, too late because God himself cannot play tricks with time, is time to repent; that is, the kind of time in which one can repent, and that is the historical time created by God and recreated in the Incarnation. In fact, he wants the time in which a man is a man, and Helen dead is Helen dead. He knew that as a man, conforming his will to his condition, he could repent.

If it (heaven) were made for man, twas made for me:
I will renounce this magick, and repent.

In the syllogism just quoted he was prepared to concede that Faustus was a man. While he is prepared to add existential realism to the logical order, he can escape from the realm of fate.

But in the final scene he can get no further than remorse. It is curious that Spinoza could not properly distinguish between remorse and repentance. Repentance is a creative revival of the past,[5] whereas remorse is the necromantic return of what we cannot face, because we have made our souls our own, and have no hand into which we can give our acts. For the Christian the structure of time is revealed, and the course of history redeemed from fate by repentance and sacrifice. "Christ's blood streams in the firmament", the

[4]Cf. Helen's kiss with the kiss of the spouse in mystical literature.
[5]See, for instance, A. A. Bowman, *A Sacramental Universe*, Oxford, 1939, p. 355

firmament by whose movements time is measured and in which the magicians read nothing but fate. Its influence has allotted death and hell. A phenomenology of repentance is a clue to the structure of time and history in a Christian philosophy. But Faustus's will to power has left him helpless before the claims of time, the unredeemable time which is Mephistopheles's atmosphere. He is but a man, paying the penalty for not accepting his humanity. Having wished to be as God, he will now be satisfied to be a creature wanting soul. Just as he was damned by wishing to be more than man, so in the end he seeks a way out by wishing to be other things, a brute beast, a water drop, a fog, as he wants an hour to be "a year, a month, a week, a natural day". He is confusing the outlines and properties of nature. He still does not want things to be themselves. Marlowe knew from Augustine that that was still pride and desperation.

I realize that there are many aspects of the *Tragicall History* which I have not touched. There is a great deal more to be said even from the angle from which I have approached it. But I set out to show that there is at any rate some poetry, the full impact of which we cannot feel, unless we bring to bear upon it much more philosophy and theology than readers and critics are often satisfied with. I notice that the Everyman's edition of Marlowe's plays[6] prints "economy" for "oncaymeon". I need say no more. If a tithe of this absurdity comes across, this paper will be justified.

[6] I refer to the 1941 reprint. [This has been corrected in M. R. Ridley's 1955 edition. Ed.]

TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

J. HENNELLY

THE inadequate conception of the teaching of English in this country is not a separate defect which can be separately remedied. It is due to a more far-reaching failure—the failure to conceive the full meaning and possibilities of education as a whole. That failure again is due to an underestimate of the importance of language and literature. The work of the English teacher in the high school for most part centres in literature, in the study and reading of books. Many of the composition exercises which he sets are properly connected with the books read in class. The passages which his pupils read aloud or learn by heart are chosen because of their literary value. The study of language (including grammar) enters into the study of literature as well as of composition. If the pupil is to have a sense of unity in his work in the English classroom, this unity is to be found primarily in the books he studies or discusses there.

In developing his method the teacher of English has the advantage of being bound by no tradition. On many of the questions involved no one can safely dogmatize. The teacher is free to learn from the experience of teachers of other literatures, and whilst he is developing his art he can scarcely be exclusive or limited in his practice.

Amidst much that is controversial the following points come into prominence.

First, there is a divergence of practice due to a difference in the lines of approach to a work of art. Some teachers preface the study of the text with an account of the events of the writer's life and of the sources on which he worked; others, and this is probably the better way, take their pupils straight to the book itself and stand aside to let the book produce its own effect.

> The real teachers of literature are the great writers themselves. The appeal of any work of art is individual and direct; and the greater the work, the more clearly it speaks for itself, and the more serious is the danger of the teacher coming between the author and the reader.

This appears to be particularly true of drama. We study and teach *Macbeth* in school, not because it deals with an historical incident, but because it is a great example of Shakespeare's genius

of the influence of character upon character, and of action upon action. We try to follow how the 'tragic hero' comes to ruin, bringing about the ruin of others in the process, through a flaw in his own character. It must be conceded that the first reading has a very real meaning for the student. Besides, is it not the case that we all read and enjoy many more books than we understand completely?

This view, of course, does not exclude the fact that the student should learn all he can about the Macbeth of history, and that the more he knows about every detail in the play the greater his profit and enjoyment at each successive reading.

Is it not one sign of a great teacher to avoid the danger of investing literature with associations that in some way hinder the student from reaching a book's deeper meaning? Is not this 'deeper meaning' often independent of historical and biographical associations? The great teacher will also avoid the danger of using literature to cultivate a shallow impressionism and an insincere fluency, which simply feeds 'the lie in the soul', from which a true education is supposed to deliver us.

Dr Johnson throws much light on the subject when he states:

> Let him, that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, with utter negligence of all his commentation. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. Parts are not to be examined till the whole has been surveyed.

Some texts may be left after the first reading, except for purposes of discussion, but most texts will require a second stage devoted to more special study of the whole or of particular passages. It would be time well spent in many cases to have a final and uninterrupted reading. Secondly, the difficulties of the second stage have to be faced from the standpoint of the pupil.

The man who has given years to the study of language and literature, but has never questioned a class of boys or girls, may have little idea of the haze which hangs for many of them over *Lycidas* or over the *Song for St Cecilia's Day* after the first reading.

Dryden refers to the need, even for a student of the classics, to 'digest' an English author:

> There are many who understand Greek and Latin, and yet are ignorant of their mother-tongue. The proprieties and delicacies of the English are known to few; it is impossible even for a good wit to understand and practise them without the help of a

liberal education, long reading and digestion of good authors, the knowledge of men and manners; and in short, without wearing off the rust which he contracted while he was laying in a stock of learning. Thus difficult it is to understand the purity of English.

It is generally a sound principle to let the pupil find out for himself all that he can. At least in some books that he reads there are superficial difficulties of vocabulary and phrase. These he can to a large extent get over for himself by means of a dictionary or a glossary. When the pupil has worked at these meanings for himself he can enjoy the fuller sense which a brief explanation gives. Is it not much better to discover the pupil's idea of the passage and by building on his knowledge, to help him to define his idea, than to begin by way of exposition?

Works of criticism are not without their dangers and defects. The inherent defect of such writings is that they tend to encourage a habit of accepting another person's judgment. The greatest value of literature consists in its direct appeal to the individual—to the young pupil just as to the adult reader. Therefore, if any critique is read it should come after the work has been studied. But, after a work has been read thoughtfully by the pupil, and after he has been brought to form a definite opinion of it, whether it be, for example, a Shakespeare play, a poem by Wordsworth, or an essay by a great prose writer, he is then likely to benefit if he reads a good criticism of the work. He is encouraged if he finds that his judgment in any way agrees with the critic's, and where there is disagreement he is given new points of view that will make his further study of the work all the more profitable. A valuable result is gained if the pupil has formed a considered opinion and, when challenged, is able to justify it intelligently.

The first condition of success in the study of literature is the ready accessibility to an ample store of books. Books are as indispensable here as scientific apparatus and equipment in the teaching of science. The pupil requires, in addition to his text-books (including an English dictionary), access to a store of general English literature which contains the commonest English classics, widely defined—poems, plays, memoirs, biographies, books of voyages and travel, fiction and so on. The store should be representative of the best writings in English literature.

When the nature of literature is realized—but not until then—it will be obvious that literature is not a thing that can be 'taught'

ike arithmetic or geography. For it is concerned, not with facts ut with impressions; and its aim is the delight of self-realization, nd not utility.

The object of literary study then is not to tell our pupils "what hey knew not, but to make them what they were not", i.e. to ncrease their susceptibility to the appeal of literature so that they nay "witness the pageant of nature and human life with appro- riate emotions and see in it all that is to be seen in it by the finest enses."

Finally, let us turn to Ruskin, whose words might fittingly be nscribed on the wall of every English classroom:

> Be sure that you go to the author to get HIS meaning, not to find yours. Judge it afterwards, if you think yourself qualified to do so, but ascertain it first. And be sure also, if the author is worth anything, that you will not get at his meaning all at once —nay, that at his whole meaning you will not for a long time arrive in any wise.

EXAMINATIONS

No one will dispute the ascendancy of the examination system in ur secondary education. We accept it as a fact, confronting the eacher of English, as of any other subject. It is there, and if English s to receive its due share of recognition, English must make terms with it. The examination system operates in two ways. It provides a est, and also a stimulus. Upon a large part of the teaching of English t can exercise these two functions with highly beneficial effect.

Yet the difficulties involved in examinations in the use of language are slight in comparison with those of examining in literature. Examinations, we have said, provide a test and a stimulus. But can all teaching be tested? Is the stimulus always in the right direction? Are there any schools so fortunate as to be able to pay due regard to literature independently of examinations? In this country a subject not examined is fated to disappear speedily from our teaching curriculum.

The Essay

The aims of this examination are defeated if a choice of subjects, hat will appeal to a wide variety of tastes and experiences, is not given. Then again, if the choice of subjects is too wide it may prove distracting to the candidate. It is generally agreed that a choice from our or five is adequate. Of these subjects one or two might be based on literature read by the candidates. There should always be at least

one subject which gives an opening for imaginative treatment, and one in which candidates of a practical bent can make use of their own experience or observation.

Literature

The syllabus for the Matriculation examination in English literature should be such as to ensure serious continuous study for two years after the Junior Certificate or Standard VIII examination. This study should be of such a nature as to equip candidates either to proceed to a university, or to carry into private life a scholarly and intelligent habit of English reading. To this end the texts employed should be sufficient both in number and variety. The syllabus should neither be so exhaustive as to deprive the teacher of the opportunity of helping students to 'digest' one or other author. The hurried methods of studying prescribed books have led to faulty work, with the stress more on extensive than on intensive reading.

If it were at all practicable the introduction of two types of English Literature papers for Matriculation might be worthy of consideration: (1) General Literature, (2) Special Literature. In this way it may be possible to eliminate misfits and help to obviate some of the present difficulties experienced by first-year university students.

Those students who propose taking literature at the university should be required to pass a General Literature paper, while students who wish to study for a degree in which literature is not required would have to pass in a Special Literature paper. Questions on literary criticism should not appear in the *Special Literature paper* but questions which draw out a candidate's appreciation of certain prescribed books should be set.

Finally, in the interests of the language, a reasonable standard of English should be maintained in all subjects of the Matriculation examination.

The report that the Transvaal Education Department has sent questionnaires to all South African universities to find out how matriculated students are faring is welcome. It is a fact that our students are crammed for the Matriculation examination, and it is doubtful if any lasting benefits are the result.

It is hoped that a revised syllabus is forthcoming and that the gap which exists between Matriculation and first-year university courses will be bridged, especially in matters pertaining to the study of literature in the secondary school.

SCHOOLMASTER

N. H. BRETTELL

At times, with a bewildered child,
Opportunity has seen us,
With point of question neatly filed
Burred against the stubborn rock,
And in the silence in between us
Fall the flat feet of the clock
Clacking confidence away:
—I see the trustful sweet grimace
Fade across the puzzled face
With a sudden screw of pain
—And know that I have failed again.

And when I pit my mild pretence
Against their serried difference,
Trying all the keys I know
That jangle at the gaoler's belt,
To open tracks that curve and go
Across the forest and the veld
Of that uncharted innocence:
I feel the grey hiatus press
Against my adult loneliness,
And silence clamps the heavy air
To leave my questions hanging there,
And moth-weak words have glanced and gone
To bruise their frantic wings upon
The silent faces bright and blind,
—And know that I am left behind.

And when my failures scamper out
Along the echoing corridor,
And points of sunlight harshly etch
The jigsaw fragments on the floor:
—I know the tide will turn about,
The half-hour's windy ebb will fetch
The romping breakers through the door:
A tuft of flowers, a broken bird,

Excitement of a curious word,
A blundering beetle disinterred,
And "have you heard, and have you heard?"
—Pitching their spindrift innocence
Upon my drenched omniscience:
O how the mirrors catch the sun
And toss the beams about the room.
The spools between us whirl and run,
And quick between the winging loom
The lizard answers pause and dart
Among the merry metaphors
—While their touch, unknowing, draws
The rat's envenomed tooth that gnaws
The strings of my unquiet heart.

EXAMINATIONS IN ENGLISH (III)

A. D. HALL

(*This is the third of the contributions to a symposium begun in the first issue.*)

DIFFERENCES of opinion about the aims and methods of university English study may often be reduced to the simple opposition between width and depth. The two contributions to the symposium on examinations in the first number of this journal offer an example. On the ultimate, or metaphysical, end to be attained, there will for the most part be agreement. One may infer from Mr Bennett's remarks that he would subscribe to the ideal inherent in Professor Durrant's comment that "the true understanding of literature comes only with a disinterested delight in reading". Division occurs about how to realize such a condition. Professor Durrant is far more convinced about the claims of 'intensive' study than is Mr Bennett, who seeks a combination of the intensive with the extensive and desires to see the student "form an acquaintance with as wide a range of English literature as possible".

I share Mr Bennett's desire, and feel in consequence that Professor Durrant dismisses too perfunctorily (even within the obvious limitations of space) those methods he disagrees with. His convictions about intensive study lead him to urge a corresponding method in examinations—the 'textual' or 'scrutiny-of-passage' type of question—and to reject the 'essay-type' question, which he does in the following terms:

> 'Essay-type' questions have grave defects. If there are enough of them to cover the field of study, the candidate has far too little time to display thorough knowledge and detailed understanding of any work. The answers must be written at great speed, and the standard of composition is usually very low. Above all, the essay-type question deals by its very nature in broad general ideas; it offers the best chances to an intelligent student who has an 'original' (Professor Durrant's quotation marks) idea, and it is disadvantageous to the well-read and really discriminating student, whose sense of the complexity of any serious work

of literature makes him hesitate to commit himself to striking general statements.

There is of course an opposite danger in the use of textual questions. Unless the questions . . . . are well framed, the candidate may be offered no choice but to follow the general line of thinking laid down by the examiner. The textual question, in other words, may easily lead down the fatally easy slope to the underworld of the 'short-answer' question. . . .

I should therefore flatly reject the textual question if it were conceived as the 'short-answer' question. But it is possible to frame questions on particular passages in such a way as to give the fullest scope for the candidate's own original perceptions. This may be done by requiring an evaluation of the part in terms of the whole, and by inviting the candidate to add any critical observations of his own, independently of any specific questions that have been asked. One liberty alone should be denied the candidate—that of writing generally from the books-about-the-author . . . and the chief defect of the essay-type questions is that it can often be better answered from a book-about-literature than from a first-hand study of literature itself.

As for the testing of critical intelligence, this seems to me much more effectively tested by this method than by essay-type questions, where the candidate can largely choose his own ground, and can easily pass off the acquired opinions of others, reproduced in general terms.

The issues here dealt with are big ones for English teaching; but before discussing some of the larger implications of confining examinations to 'scrutiny-of-passage' questions, I must query the defects alleged against essay-type questions. The objections advanced by Professor Durrant seem to me by no means axiomatic.

The principal allegation is of inescapable generality: "Above all, the essay-type question deals by its very nature in broad general ideas . . ." To this one can only reply that an examiner may, if he thinks there is any profit in it, ask for a history of the novel in 1,000 words; but that he is more likely to set an essay-type question calling for an evaluation of "the part in terms of the whole work". Yet such an evaluation is associated by Professor Durrant only with the textual method. Moreover, when inviting such an evalua-

tion, Professor Durrant is all for giving the liberty of "adding any critical observations of his own". This liberty invites, not the risk, but the certainty, that the candidate will write an essay answer, and that he will "choose his own ground" and even, perhaps, utter some "striking general statements" and "original" ideas. Nor does the candidate seem secure from the dangers of writing at great speed and composing at low standard. The case seems to be this: that an essay-type question on *King Lear* is inadmissible, but that the same question when yoked to a gobbet has multiple virtues.

The suggestion that essay-type questions should attempt, or do attempt, to "cover the field of study" is a strange one. It has surely never been the aim, or within the capacity, of any type of question to 'cover' a syllabus. Only the candidate can do that, and the examiner encourages him to do so by the threat of limited, and unpredictable, choice in the examination paper. Within the ordinary meaning of the word, no self-respecting syllabus could be 'covered' by any type of examination in the time normally allowed by universities. (The word 'cover' perhaps offers a clue to the pejorative conception of the essay-type question advanced by Professor Durrant. It is possibly being associated with the kind of study that was the bogy of the reformers a generation ago: the 'sources-and-influences', 'development-of-the-novel/drama/sonnet' and other 'belle-lettrist', literary-historical approaches which did demand very broad coverage. This would also account for the allegation about the speed with which the essay-type question tends to be answered: if the candidate is required to exhibit his accumulations of literary-historical information, rather than to show his understanding of particular works or authors, he will of course disgorge at maximum speed).

One can only assume that the antithesis between the "intelligent student" and the "well read and really discriminating student" is a rhetorical one. A candidate whose study of a serious and complex work of literature has not led him to appreciate these qualities must surely reveal his failure in the examination, and cannot then in any relevant sense be accounted intelligent. The examiner will not be doing his job if he allows credit to the candidate for any "striking general statements" irrelevant to the question asked. He will also not be doing his job if he gives the candidate credit for the reproduction of irrelevant information or ideas from books-about-books. The highest test is relevance, whether in judging a work, or in answering (or marking) an examination question. If a

candidate uses ideas, be they common to literary students or to humanity at large, in a relevant way, one cannot say they are second-hand; he may have picked them up, but if he can handle them then he has made them his own.

It may seem captious to refine upon these points—the more so, since no concession could be more generous than Professor Durrant's assertion that "one liberty alone should be denied to the candidate—that of writing generally from the books-about-the-author". But since he has lent his authority to a rather arbitrary definition of the essay-type question, one can not do less than suggest that many of the alleged defects are illusory. There is no magic in the type of question. It is what is done with it; it is the candidate's answer and the examiner's assessment of that answer that must count; nothing abates the true obligations of either party. The good candidate will write a good answer to an unsatisfactory question showing, in passing, a recognition of the question's inadequacy. The poor candidate will write a poor answer to a good question (unless the question has so shamelessly 'led' him that he cannot but produce the 'right' answer, in which case, of course, it was not a good question). Both types of question, essay and textual, have their obvious and distinct functions. Both have a purpose to serve, and both seem to me to be necessary.

The real issue lies in the recommendation that the textual type of question be used exclusively. Such a limitation will produce wide, and I believe undesirable, repercussions. Professor Durrant pointedly remarks, "The syllabus will in general (human nature being what it is) be studied in the spirit in which the examination papers of past years have been set." To this must be added the rider that examiners will teach in the spirit in which they examine and, human nature being what it is, examiners monogamously wedded to the textual approach will concentrate on textual analysis and will, further, tend to prescribe works that lend themselves to the textual methods. And not only will there be a limitation in kind, but a limitation in number, since you cannot study 'intensively' a very wide range of literature.

The limitations of kind may be taken first. It is becoming increasingly clear, if it is not already commonplace, that the Eliot-Richards-Leavis critical revolution of thirty years ago has had its narrowing, as well as its liberating, effect. The new poetry (and the cognate new criticism) of the 1920s, working to create the taste by which it would be enjoyed, promoted the reading and understanding of, *inter alia*, seventeenth century poetry. 'Metaphysical'

writing acquired the status almost of a norm against which poetry in general might be measured. A continuity of consciousness was discovered between the seventeenth century and the twentieth century, and this continuity became the "great tradition". From this issued the belief that all poetry could be read as contemporary poetry, detached from its context in time. It also led, as has been frequently demonstrated, to a very high valuation of 'complexity'—"a kind of complexity", as R. A. Foakes says in his recent *The Romantic Assertion*, "consisting in the balance and tension between conflicting elements held in suspension in the unity of the poem and emerging in irony and paradox [which] is characteristic of Metaphysical and much modern poetry, and is perhaps only possible in a relatively short poem." Foakes points to a further criterion born of this poetic and critical outlook: "the demand that each line of a poem be able to bear the severest scrutiny, that each line reflect the qualities of 'inclusive' poetry".

It needs no demonstrating what obtuseness this attitude led to in the reading of much 19th century poetry. *A* method became *the* method. There was set up as almost a single valid standard a species of critical procedure in which the premises entailed the conclusion. If the premises are complexity, 'inclusiveness', irony, paradox, ambiguity, the necessary result will not be reached with certain kinds of writing. Mr Eliot's early evaluation of Milton is perhaps a case in point. Donne produced the right answers; Milton, Shelley, Arnold and Tennyson the wrong ones. And since Milton, Shelley, Arnold and Tennyson were in any case not congenial for the moment, critical confirmation of the fact was regarded as highly satisfactory. The method had shown its scientific validity by yielding the results predicted for it. Because this particular method grew out of, and therefore gets the most satisfactory results from, complex work, there has been a tendency to allow the complex and 'organically conceived work of literature' to oust other kinds whose quality is not analytically so demonstrable, at any rate with the prescribed tools. James supersedes Dickens, Forster supersedes Fielding, Conrad supersedes Thackeray. A new generation of critics is now busy discovering a truth that was, perhaps, never entirely hidden from the simpler reader: that although the post-Dickensian novel showed enormous gains in style and form, in disciplined selection, in moral and psychological subtlety and in symbolic handling, there have been accompanying losses—in the alienation of human appeal, in esotericism, in self-consciousness; and that Dickens, after the

passing of a generation that had to unlearn his ways, has new and profound lessons to teach.

'Intensive' analysis places great emphasis on the formal qualities of a work; it is through such analysis that criticism has disseminated the present wide awareness and esteem of formal qualities. Of course a student should come to know why Dickens is placed lower in the hierarchy of the novel than James or Dostoevsky or Tolstoy or Proust or any others who have combined moral perception and aesthetic judgment in perfect or near-perfect proportions, and have shown themselves sublime masters of their material. But the formal emphasis can be negative, if taken too far. I have known students who have been encouraged, not necessarily by their mentors, but by the critical implications of their method, to express contempt for Dickens, because they were confident of proving that he was not worthy of the very highest regard. This was easily converted to a belief that he was not worthy of regard at all.

By forcing the early acquisition of 'critical discrimination' and 'critical judgment', it is easy to turn out prigs. I have known all too many graduates whose three years' study provided them with a detailed knowledge of a score (or less) of novels and a proportionate number of plays and poems (each studied *in vacuo* as a timeless, autonomous entity), and who entertained on the basis of this little learning the confident notion that they were now possessors of an absolute critical equipment, proof against any kind of intellectual, moral or aesthetic humbug. They compensated for their absence of knowledge by an ardent devotion to principle. Prematurely concerned with that most difficult of all critical problems, the problem of art as art, they had become skilled illiterates who could connect nothing with nothing. They had no idea of how little they knew (many could not place major authors within half a century, or worse), and possessed in consequence none of the humility which knowledge should induce. They had not the desire nor the flexibility to explore beyond the known territory. They had acquired, in short, a neat Calvinistic code which pandered to the natural human desire for simplification and to the delusive search for ultimate standards in aesthetics and morality. The young are too hot after certainties to be encouraged in an early discovery of the absolute.

Study should lead to discovery, increased sensibility, wider horizons. And these will be placed within nearer reach of attainment if we insist upon experience as well as standards. Our students are frequently charged with poverty of background. Intensive study of

a limited number of books seems to me no remedy. Nor is it a defence to say that such study will equip them with the discrimination they will need when they are on their own and filling in the gaps that had to be left in the syllabus. Youth is the receptive time, the time to experience as wide a variety of life, and books, as possible. It is the fair seed-time. You may later encourage what has been planted; you cannot encourage what has not been planted, or sow when the time is past.

An 'intensive' discipline makes too little allowance for the age and capacities of university students, especially in their first and second years. They are still very much in the childhood stage of accumulating experience; accumulation, much less than discrimination, is for them the natural process. The philosophic and analytical faculties are the last to mature. Their growth has to be encouraged and aided; but it must be done gradually and tactfully. There is a delight in discovery that is easily destroyed by too much reflection. 'To define is to destroy' is a maxim of vigorous application at the age of 18. If the analytical examination of individual works is hurried, we bewilder the student and defeat our purpose. It becomes for them a journey without maps. Criticism grows out of comparison, and the ill-read can make no comparisons. If experience is so limited that no differences or similarities are discernible, there will be nothing to express, nothing demanding release. Dr Johnson, when asked what was the value of literary study, replied:

> The greater part of readers, instead of blaming us for passing trifles, will wonder that on trifles so much labour is expended, with such importance of debate, and such solemnity of diction. To these I answer with confidence, that they are judging of an art they do not understand; yet cannot much reproach them with their ignorance, nor promise that they would become happier in general by learning criticism, more useful, happier or wiser.

This recognizes that, without the inner need for clarification, criticism appears an activity of no utility and negligible interest. The first requirement is a background of reading to which to appeal, or we shall be trying to teach the student an art in which he can discover no pleasure or purpose. "One ought to know all good things with familiarity, because understanding does not make you love." With the young, said C. Day Lewis, we must see that they give their hearts to poems, before we ask them to give their minds to Poetry. They are eager to discover the variety that lies about them; but the urge

is easily stifled by pressing them too hard to objectify, through analytical procedures, the confusion that lies inside them. They should first be encouraged to acquire some general sense of the infinite human variety contained in the written records. Instincts must be trained as well as minds, and nature decrees that it shall be the instincts first.

Students must be given some broad view of the territory which they will be asked to explore more deeply as they go on. If they do not possess anything approaching such a view when they arrive at the university—and it is common cause that the great majority do not—then they must be given it. However distasteful or undignified it may be to begin, rather than complete, a student's education at the university, it is necessary (and an English department doing so will only be falling into line with the increasing number of departments offering preliminary courses).

One must start with the big maps, even if they are imprecise, superficial and capable of misleading. While the students are reading as hard and as widely as we can make them, we can lead them to make some of the broader correlations and comparisons, and discover some of the more useful commonplaces—and to them they will be discoveries. While they are accumulating, they will also be ordering. Certain broad classifications and patterns, chronological and critical, will give the student a certain confidence about the lie of the land. I believe a certain minimum confidence to be necessary, and that the majority of students lack that minimum. Does there exist a study where one does not proceed from the general to the particular?

To pitchfork the novice into a textual-critical discipline in the name of literary study is like thrusting him into a study of constitutional documents in the name of history. Without historical knowledge, what significance will he find in the documents? Promise an adolescent a visit to Italy and he will be delighted at the prospect; but confine him for the period of the visit to the Vatican Museum, and there will follow just reproaches that, considering his age and capacities, the opportunities of travel have been abused. Lucy Honeychurch, in *A Room with a View*, went to Florence with the misguided intention of learning, under Ruskin's far too expert tutelage, all about the "tactile values" of Giotto. A benevolent author, having an eye to her age and capacities, allowed her to discover Italy instead, and through Italy, "that most priceless of all possessions—her own soul". As Lucy could find no delight,

but only incomprehensible duty, in her Baedecker tour of Santa Croce, so the unprepared student will experience no delight in literature, if he has imposed upon him the obligation to experience certain responses, and to excogitate reasons for those responses, by examining details of art and craft, and noting complexities and interrelations that his lack of experience makes him quite incapable of doing.

Anyone who has answered a child's question about the book that is being read to it, and has seen how easy it is to over-elaborate the reply, must appreciate the proportionate dangers in the case of the young student. Questions grow out of curiosity. One cannot attend to the answers to questions that one is not yet in a position to ask. To harry a student to 'understand', along the most advanced critical lines, the totality of a work, is to drive him beyond the range of his curiosity and capacity. It is all too easy to be over-ambitious about what a student can or should discover in a book, especially when it is done with the highest intentions. You must hang the carrot out of reach, but not out of sight. It is enough, to begin with, to ask the student to experience a book, and hope that under our guidance, and according to his capacity, something relevant will have impressed itself upon him, and that he will have advanced according to his powers. Want of years must place the young student a long way from understanding, in anything like the way his author intended it or the older reader will understand it, the serious and complex work. Yet we do not forbid the reading of, say, Jane Austen, to a 12-year-old simply because of the child's inability to experience fully (let alone appraise) the moral integrity and perfect art of the author. Nor do we insist on those qualities in discussing Jane Austen with the child, knowing that it would only bore or bewilder. The early rhetoricians distinguished four levels of meaning in a poem: the literal,the allegorical, the moral and the anagogical. We need to take care that we do not try, by abrupt and forcible methods, to bridge the gap between the literal and the anagogical years before it is really possible.

I suspect that the South African student is sometimes equated with the guinea-pigs of Richards's *Practical Criticism*, and the comparison seems to me unwarrantable. The English university student is older, better prepared, better read (in the 1920s a great deal better read, I imagine), and the failure of Richards's students to appraise the wine without seeing the label on the bottle posed a different problem from ours. Those students had had the exper-

ience and missed the meaning. Ours have not yet even had the experience. We are at the even more backward stage of needing to give the student the material to work with, the range of reading and aesthetic experience that will endow criticism with meaning. We ought to be able to expect more of them when they arrive at the university, but we know that we cannot. (Nor, one may remark, need we be surprised, if we have an eye to some of the crossword-puzzling that goes on in matriculation papers, in the name of comprehension and appreciation of literature. Teachers complain, very understandably, that preparing a class to answer matriculation examination questions is a painfully distinct thing from trying to give them the basic literary training suited to their years.)

The intensive, textual method, if it is to be really meaningful, demands a mature and experienced mind. Leavis appeals constantly to (one could say 'harps on') the "intelligent" and "adult" mind. And understandably so. The discrimination of the minuter subtleties of a closely-knit work, the implicit or explicit inference of the whole from the part, the appraisal of artistic achievement, is work for the critic of wide experience both in books and life. The expert anatomist may infer the whole skeleton from a single bone; the expert archaeologist may infer a civilization from a handful of shards: and they are able to do this because they see the field whole; without some kind of synoptic view, however sketchy, the fragment remains a fragment.

The young, perceiving that they must reach certain results to pass the examination, will imitate the outward forms of the textual procedure, if they cannot compass the essential means. It is only by postulating that they are trying to ape results (since they cannot comprehend the means) that I can account for the ingenious absurdities that students torture from texts they have to comment on. They have seen their teachers in pursuit of types of 'empsiguity' and so they attempt to operate on the same level of intuition or ingenuity. I have seen them given a poem, a simple one (perhaps because it is suited to their years), whose effect is in its music or in something tenuous and beyond the reach of rational analysis. The surface meaning is obvious. The spirit and tone of the poem—its *raison d'etre*—evade the probe. But in the name of principle, there must be questions. The truly relevant questions cannot be asked of young students, if they can be asked at all. So we have 'comprehension' questions, about a surface meaning already so apparent that anyone who cannot follow it unaided will hardly be helped by th

questions. The candidate (usually the more intelligent one) cannot credit that anyone would ask so obvious a question, and instantly suspects his own understanding. In desperation, he begins to rummage in the dim cupboards of symbol and ambiguity, and before we know where we are (and I quote an actual case) Rossetti's *The Woodspurge* has become a statement of trinitarian dogma or a prediction of the ending of the world.

The intensive method, as I have seen it at work, results in a deplorable dependence of the student upon his tutors; for a bewildered student is a dependent student, and discouraged from fending for himself (notice the permissive nature of Professor Durrant's remark, "If the study of critical and biographical works has, in fact, been profitably pursued . . ."), he will fall back upon his other resource, the teacher. He comes to depend on the lecturer-about-the-book; and instead of learning independence in the library (the book-about-the-book) he will hardly advance beyond his schooldays in the matter of being hand-fed. In actual practice the 'intensive' method, as I have seen it at work, has placed a very great emphasis on teaching. This is hardly noticed, because the South African university student is grossly over-lectured in almost all subjects. The official attendance requirements are a clear implication that the lecture is the basis of work, that the classroom and not the library is where things *really* get done. It is quite easy to graduate without having discovered that one comes to a university to learn and not to be taught. We tell the student at the beginning of his career that he is on his own, that the library is the true heart of the institution; but our practice defeats our precepts, and often nowhere more than in departments of English. To discourage students from using commentaries to help them in their reading, on the purist grounds that they may abuse them, is not only perverse but pusillanimous. The danger is, of course, a very great one; but the positive approach is to lead them to a proper usage. Prohibition, whether in the matter of alcohol or of academic studies, is a futile measure.

One may remark in passing a certain usage current in departments of English, viz. "to teach a novel" (or poem or play). I do not impugn the construction (perhaps one ought to?); but it is a usage not without its semantic warning, for it comes close to admitting indoctrination, and an insistence on the 'absolute' interpretation. Not thus shall we develop 'negative capability' in our students, either as critics or as creators.

My concern in this essay has been chiefly with the younger

student, and what method of study-cum-examination best meets his immaturity and poverty of background. I am aware that, while I have been emphasizing that he is ill-read, others will interpose that he is also incapable of reading, that he finds the greatest difficulty in coping with the printed page in his own language, and that this is the greater emergency. While our schools produce, and our university entrance qualifications admit, illiterates, we shall have to take measures to meet the emergency. I can only reply that if we look too hard to the end and ignore the proper means, we shall not get any further. I regard it as a jump at the end, if we precipitate the student into close textual study, because it involves a discipline or method, which by its nature deals with artistic problems outside the range of the young student, even the moderately prepared and intelligent one. There are, of course, exceptions.

We must also distinguish between the student's ability to read (or misread) what lies within the compass of his understanding, and his inability to read what is beyond it, and what no local and immediate effort on his part can make him understand. That we do not always do so is evidenced by the sometimes unsuitable works prescribed.

It will be obvious that, in advocating what I regard as a natural procedure, namely, movement from the general to the particular, I shall also advocate (certainly in the early phases of study) the essay-type question, as being the one suited to a general test of the candidate's knowledge and understanding. I by no means exclude the textual type, but its use will be sparing, not compulsory. In arguing for an extensive list of prescribed works, I must also argue for an examination that seeks to establish, as the minimum requirement, evidence simply that the books have been read, and that some sense of their broad significance has been grasped. The student who has gained a deeper insight into a work will not be denied the opportunity to demonstrate (or to conceal) the fact, for it is always an advantage to give the candidate plenty of room to show what he knows, and a disadvantage to prevent him from choosing his own ground. (I am not speaking of irrelevance.) The examination may also test some of the simpler and more obvious comparisons and correlations between authors and styles. Above all, the examination should not be allowed to settle into a predictable pattern. Some slight uncertainty as to what the examiners will look for is the best spur to work and discovery on the student's part. One thing the student must learn, and that is to work on his own, to develop his

peculiar bent, and to discover his own mind. The teacher's part in classroom and examination hall is tactful guidance and suggestion, always fighting the temptation to give too firm a direction, or to strive for the victory of his own ideas. History is littered with those who found, not *an* answer, but *the* answer.

SOME ATTITUDES AND IDEAS OF ROBERT FROST

JOHN R. DOYLE, JR.

ALWAYS a deep, clear, and broad love of earth, of the physical, has pervaded the poetry of Robert Frost. Turn anywhere among his poems, early or late, long or short, and evidence of this love appears—with an accuracy that proves a respect for the material used, with a loving attention to detail that proves a human belief in individuality rather than a scientific concern for abstraction, and with an abundance that proves a permanent rather than a passing interest.

The Frost accuracy is illustrated by what he has to say when faced with various well-known 'things' from the world of physical actuality. Of a little calf, he said, "It's so young/ It totters when she licks it with her tongue". Concerning the twilight period, he wrote, "I dream upon the opposing lights of the hour,/ Preventing shadow until the moon prevail . . . ." As to why a mower's scythe seems sharp, he observed, "The dew was gone that made his blade so keen . . . ." Of an abandoned pile of wood, he suggested that it only "warm(ed) the frozen swamp as best it could/ With the slow smokeless burning of decay".

The abundance and variety of the physical things of earth which Frost uses in his poems show that the poet's interest is no transient feeling. A whole poem is built around the actions of a hornet, an eastern stream which runs west, a microscopic creature too small to be identified with a name. Quite factually the poet will give in one poem an account of the creation of a mythical wife; in another factually he will give an account of an old man's winter night. Again in one poem he will use realistic detail to bring a ghost story down into the realm of the believable; in another he will add realistic detail to realistic detail in such a relationship that what seemed in the beginning commonplace has led to revelation.

It would be easy to continue almost indefinitely assembling indirect evidence to show Frost's love of earth, but in addition to the indirect evidence it is possible to exhibit a collection of direct statements which extend over more than a quarter of a century. Throughout his writing life he has associated heart—love—earth. In an early poem he wrote :

Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.

In another poem in the same volume he observed that

Love has earth to which she clings . . . .

Seven years later the heart (where in our time love is located) was still clinging to earth. Five years later still, another poem was making a similar claim. Years afterwards he was writing an entire poem to say that man must give himself with absolute love to the earth if he expects the earth to give itself to him. In the same volume he made the statement, "I had a lover's quarrel with the world", which was certainly the only kind Robert Frost could ever have with the world.

* * *

The Biblical account of the Good Samaritan is perhaps the world's most famous story presenting man's concern for the sorrows and misfortunes of another. Frost, in the first of the dramatic narratives to secure a wide audience, *The Death of the Hired Man*, began to give extended attention to this matter. In the poem there are two people, Mary and Warren, who are specifically concerned with the sorrows and misfortunes of Silas, the hired man. The point of the poem comes from the fact that Mary and Warren are under no obligation to Silas, except the universal obligation that comes with being a part of humanity. Not only is there no special reason why Silas should be taken in when he appears, Warren feels there is reason why he should not. At the beginning of the poem, when Mary warns him to be kind to Silas, who has returned during Warren's absence from the farm, Warren says,

When was I ever anything but kind to him?
But I'll not have the fellow back, . . .
I told him so last haying, didn't I?
If he left then, I said, that ended it.
What good is he? . . . .

Even Mary uses the phrase "Worthless though he is". Warren's statement comes early, Mary's late. Husband and wife agree on the fact that Silas is of little or no value to them. Also, it is important to remember that the evaluation does not change during the poem. Yet the gradual change in another way in Warren is one of the important aspects of the poem. His first words are uttered in a loud and challenging tone. Yet from the beginning Warren is truly concerned (as he has been for years), and gradually his voice softens

and he shows with Mary his sympathy for Silas's problems and together they will accept the pretence with which Silas maintains his self-respect. They even reach the point at which they speak of Silas's return as coming 'home'. Here each gives a definition of home. Warren says,

> Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
> They have to take you in.

This is an exact statement of what is happening to Silas. He feels that he must come to Warren and Mary or there is nowhere. When he comes 'home', they must take him in because they are good human beings and cannot refuse another human being in need. Mary's definition of home is, within the context of the poem, an extension of Warren's.

> I should have called it
> Something you somehow haven't to deserve.

The *mystery* of the home is contained in the word "somehow"; the *fact* of the home is contained in the phrase "haven't to deserve". How home can be what it is and do what it does is a mystery, but that home is and does as defined is a fact. Yet because home is like this, because one does not have to deserve it, home takes one in when it is necessary to go there. On the basis of his actions, Silas does not deserve consideration. This, however, is all the home he knows, and thus he does not have to deserve what Mary does for him, and Warren has to take him in when he has to return. Thus Mary and Warren, without asking for it, have had to accept and help solve the problems of others.

* * *

Throughout his adult years Frost has been a living example of being ready to make the best of what the world has to offer, an attitude which is constantly reflected in his writing. *The Investment* presents an unusual example of the attempt on the part of human beings to make the best of what the world has offered.

> Over back where they speak of life as staying
> ('You couldn't call it living, for it ain't'),
> There was an old, old house renewed with paint,
> And in it a piano loudly playing.
>
> Out in the plowed ground in the cold a digger,
> Among unearthed potatoes standing still,

Was counting winter dinners, one a hill,
With half an ear to the piano's vigor.

All that piano and new paint back there,
Was it some money suddenly come into?
Or some extravagance young love had been to?
Or old love on an impulse not to care—

Not to sink under being man and wife,
But get some color and music out of life?

This, one of the infrequent Frost sonnets, is filled with devices that put a much desired aesthetic distance between the reader and material that should not be viewed too close up. The first line contains two things to attract the reader's attention: first, the unusualness of "Over back" and, second, the rather amazing implications of having to speak of life as no more than "staying". Some readers will pause and frown to find "ain't" in a sonnet, even within a quotation, especially in a rhyme position; but even a frown ensures that the reader's attention has, for a moment, been removed from the poverty of the life which he sees before him.

The second quatrain, which is used to give concretely the family's marginal existence, gives the reader more than fact. The digger's attention is divided between potatoes and piano. It is, however, the "vigor" of the piano which attracts him, not its exquisite tone or a mastery of performance on the part of the pianist. Upon reaching "vigor" the reader smiles, especially since it is given extra force because of having been rhymed with "digger". The third quatrain and the couplet offer three questions, though none is answered. In context, each question serves a purpose. Question one serves as relief. If the piano and paint represent "money suddenly come into", there is no need for sympathy, but quite the reverse. In personal circumstances, it would be cause for rejoicing or envy; in impersonal, cause merely for an observation of "What luck!" In the event that the piano and paint are looked upon as unwise spending, the reaction might be "How foolish!" Any of these reactions will lead the mind and heart away from the hardships of life that has been "lived" here. Question two turns the mind towards something which for a short time pushes all other considerations aside. If the piano and paint are "extravagances" of "young love", all else is forgotten for the moment, both by the lovers and

by the reader. No need to waste sympathy on these two—later, perhaps, but not now. Question three is the one upon which the author dwells. It is three times as long as the others, and draws the mind back to more sobering thoughts, if not more sober actions. If old love acts in this way, one can but admire its open-eyed daring or durability, or both. This last is a very genuine making the best of what is: a refusal to bow to time; a refusal to "sink under being man and wife". It takes courage to get "color and music out of life", even in the simple physical sense meant here on the first level, for the odds are great.

Together the three questions offer an ambiguity, for there is no way of knowing finally which is the 'true' question, or whether any one is the 'true' question. Until an answer is given, the reader cannot feel uncomfortable about the situation, because he is not quite sure that there is a need for sympathy. In fact, the reader is inclined to feel good, inclined to feel that here is an example of human strength and courage great enough to meet the world's trials. Life is a tough opponent, but man is capable of winning some victories.

* * *

Several years ago Frost wrote in the author's copy of *A Masque of Mercy:*

> In the other Masque I made Job's Wife say the Devil was God's best inspiration. That (is) not quite enough to say. It is true much good is merely counter-bad, an answer to the challenge of evil. But the best good is always self-inspired.

This recent statement merely summarizes in a direct comment what has been a powerful implication of the Frost poetry from the beginning.

At the end of *North of Boston*, one of Frost's most sensitively drawn characters shows the nature of good which can arise from a person even though there has been no opposition of any kind to draw it out. Here in *The Self-Seeker* he develops the type of human being who symbolizes pure love. For a living, this man works in a mill, but his life's work is with flowers. Though he is not a professional scientist, he is nevertheless a serious and informed student of the flowers of his region. This type of study is always a work of pure love. Such effort has nothing to do with time required, or difficulties encountered, or opposition from friends, enemies, or a

whole society. Often the world does not recognize these people until they are dead, or perhaps have reached advanced old age. Yet nothing matters except the work, upon which the world does not know how to place a value.

The story which Frost tells is of a man who has been seriously injured while at work in the mill. He may never walk again, probably at best will hobble a little. Before the final answer is known as to his condition, the company for which he worked has sent a lawyer to make a settlement. One of his friends is with him before the lawyer comes and after he arrives, and the friend objects throughout to the small sum they offer, in fact to a settlement at all before the doctor gives his final word. The friend, Willis, reminds the injured man of what this means to his gathering information about the flowers of the region, but the man replies,

> . . . . I'm not selling those, I'm giving them, . . .
> Money can't pay for the loss of them.

His contribution, 'the Broken One' Frost calls him, to the world's knowledge is a good beyond that which can be paid for with money.

There is one other important point to be considered in an examination of the poem. With characteristic casualness, Frost has brought into the room a little girl, Anne, who has two orchids for the 'Broken One'. Anne has not been introduced to give a touch of charm or relief or anything else of the sort, though the lawyer sees her as 'A pretty interlude'. Frost uses this little girl to explain the past and foreshadow the years ahead. When he has not needed her, the now injured man has taught Anne about flowers, where to look, what to pick, what not to pick—in short, his knowledge was becoming hers as fast as a very little girl could absorb it. Now suddenly an accident has made Anne very important in an unexpected way. Of Anne the injured one says,

> She's going to do my scouting in the field,
> Over stone walls and all along a wood
> And by a river bank for water flowers,

Thus, though the injured man feels the physical pain as much as any human being, and though he perhaps feels even greater distress than the average person over the loss to his work and the 'deal' being handed him by the business and professional world, he is not going to be defeated nor turn sour. The power of such self-generated good is never put on display, but it is perhaps the world's greatest force.

* * *

One of the qualities in man that Frost admires most is the courage to be an individual. Four years before the appearance of his first book he published a poem called *Into Mine Own*, in which the poet began to state his ideas on the subject of individual integrity, or the courage to be alone in life. When his first book appeared, this poem was on page one. Seven years later the first poem of *Mountain Interval* pursued the theme of choosing a direction in life and holding to the course. The poem referred to is the extremely well-known *The Road Not Taken*. The choice made was one of independence, "the one less travelled by".

The courage of integrity is not reserved for great men in high office or prominent positions. One of Frost's most brilliant portrayals occurs in *A Servant to Servants*. The speaker in *Mending Wall* refuses unquestioning acceptance and examines shrewdly the passive following of tradition, with the courage to make personal decisions. A few pages later, in *A Hundred Collars*, another individualist appears, Lafe, Vermont Democrat, who clearly thinks his own thoughts and lives his own life. The very next poem, *The Black Cottage*, is a study in serene and independent holding to one's position and in unhurried thinking. Baptiste, in *The Ax-Helve*, is another of Frost's characters who has the courage to stand against the world on the basis of his convictions.

The title poem of *New Hampshire* is based in part on the idea of independence, separateness, though it may be against the trend of the world. Much of the poem is autobiographical. On one of these autobiographical occasions, the author remarks,

> I refuse to adapt myself a mite
> To any change from hot to cold, from wet
> To dry, from poor to rich, or back again.

Those who know Robert Frost and his poetry know that these lines cannot be taken literally in isolation, otherwise they would be mere cantankerousness. In context they do, however, insist that Frost refuses to be turned aside by every fad, swayed by each new philosophy, influenced unduly by the climate of opinion of his day. Always he has had the courage of his originality.

* * *

Over a long period of time Robert Frost has been interested in what he has called "the trial by market". To him the test of the market is a challenge to the man who produces to offer that which

the market cannot do without. That is the trial. He must make the market desire him, understand him, and acknowledge the worth of him.

One of the best places to begin a study of "the trial by market" is in the poem called *Christmas Trees*. Throughout the poem the speaker shows a quiet, deep, and tender love for his trees—the initial reaction definitely being emotional, imaginative, aesthetic. The important fact of the poem, however, is not that he loves his trees, recognizes their beauty, and refuses to sell them; the important fact is that though he looks upon the trees from more than a business point of view, he has not ignored business. He has not refused to sell in the future; he has refused to sell under the present conditions. When he says he will not hold his trees "Beyond the time of profitable growth", he means more than the mere fact of the price he is to receive. The statement of the poem as a whole seems to include "profitable" in relation to the potentialities of the trees. The owner realizes that finally his love must be weighed against the complete value of the trees, the "trial by market". Yet until the trees have reached their greatest value from every point of view, the market must not win them.

Twenty years later, in *Build Soil—A Political Pastoral*, Frost demonstrated quite clearly what he meant by "the time of profitable growth":

> To market 'tis our destiny to go.
> But much as in the end we bring for sale there
> There is still more we never bring or should bring;
> More that should be kept back—the soil for instance
> In my opinion,—though we both know poets
> Who fall all over each other to bring soil
> And even subsoil and hardpan to market . . . .
> . . . . . so live
> That none shall ever see you come to market—
> Not for a long long time. Plant, breed, produce,
> But what you raise or grow, why feed it out,
> Eat it or plow it under where it stands
> To build the soil. For what is more accursed
> Than an impoverished soil pale and metallic? . . . .
> I'll make a compact with you, Meliboeus,
> To match you deed for deed and plan for plan . . . .
> You will go to your run-out mountain farm
> And do what I command you . . . .
> Build soil. Turn the farm in upon itself
> Until it can contain itself no more,

But sweating-full, drips wine and oil a little.
I will go to my run-out social mind
And be as unsocial with it as I can.
The thought I have, and my first impulse is
To take to market—I will turn it under.
The thought from that thought—I will turn it under.
And so on to the limit of my nature.

The castigation here is not of going to market but of going with a product not yet ready for market, of thinking only of getting to market—of profit—and not of creating and of building and of preserving. Profit alone usually refers to a get-all-you-can-out-of-it-now attitude; Frost's "time of profitable growth" refers to the benefit to all. A course of action that leaves any of the great factors out will ultimately destroy all. Frost also applies his "time of profitable growth" to ideas. Just as surely as trees and crops, ideas need a time of growth.

Frost's own publishing life will prove that he has never rushed to market. Though he has exercised great restraint in the number of poems he has brought to market, it is impossible to say how much he has written during the more than sixty years he has been composing. That he perhaps considers himself one of his own best critics as to what he has to offer for market is illustrated by the following incident.

Once, during conversation, the subject became the question of whether or not poets were good critics or trustworthy critics of their own work, and Frost was asked pointedly what he thought. Characteristically, he began to discuss the question without giving a direct answer. He had often been admonished, he admitted, not to destroy any lines he had written—on the theory that poets are not reliable judges of their own work. More than one person present rushed to meet the 'come on' remark with "Do you destroy any of your poems?" Turning to the oldest member of the group, the one nearest him and the leader of the conversation at the moment, Frost twinkled both with eye and voice, "For all you know I may be twice as good a poet as you now believe me to be".

* * *

Very deep in Robert Frost is the belief that Man's goal should be effort and accomplishment, not happiness. The following famous lines from *New Hampshire* show clearly that the poet does not

expect much happiness from life:

I make a virtue of my suffering
From nearly everything that goes on round me.
In other words, I know wherever I am,
Being the creature of literature I am,
I shall not lack for pain to keep me awake.
Kit Marlowe taught me how to say my prayers:
'Why, this is Hell, nor am I out of it.'

If one of the two basic meanings in these lines leaves any doubt about Frost's attitude, he has put the following in *A Masque of Reason:*

. . . . You perhaps will tell us
If that is all there is to be of Heaven,
Escape from so great pains of life on earth
It gives a sense of let-up calculated
To last a fellow to Eternity.

Though Frost believes that life and pain are almost synonymous, he in general believes that it is possible for man to conquer life. Conquest, of course, requires great effort, sometimes even heroic effort, though on many occasions man may not know towards what achievement his effort is leading.

That life demands an unending effort is concretely projected in *A Leaf Treader*, which looks back to early poems and forward to later poems. A work of broad implication, the poem is of autumn, of old age, and of courage. Each stanza could be a complete poem, but the three together create relationships that could not otherwise exist. The first stanza is the autumn poem, which, after the expending of much strength and fierce effort, ends in safety:

I have been treading on leaves all day until I am autumn-tired.
God knows all the color and form of leaves I have trodden on and mired.
Perhaps I have put forth too much strength and been too fierce from fear.
I have safely trodden underfoot the leaves of another year.

This much of the poem reminds one of the twenty-two years earlier *After Apple-Picking*.

The second stanza is the old age and death poem, and is also a challenge poem and one of Frost's meeting and passing poems:

All summer long they were overhead, more lifted up than I.
To come to their final place in earth they had to pass me by.
All summer long I thought I heard them threatening under their breath.

And when they came it seemed with a will to carry me with them
to death.

The first stanza was of work, of great effort, of accomplishment; the second stanza pauses to introduce other elements before attempting a conclusion. In the first two lines, simple and accurate images establish important ideas. The crucial words are "lifted up", which phrase makes the statement more than the physical fact of being "higher up". The leaves have had their natural time of being exalted; now they return to the earth. All will end there. Though man is now "more lifted up" than the leaves, he will rest with them some day—though not yet.

The third stanza is the poem of courage, but in context it is an expansion of stanza two:

They spoke to the fugitive in my heart as if it were leaf to leaf.
They tapped at my eyelids and touched my lips with an invitation
to grief.

But it was no reason I had to go because they had to go.
Now up my knee to keep on top of another year of snow.

The leaves speak to the "fugitive" tendencies in man, to flee from life. Much as the thrush in *Come In* and the dark woods in *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, the leaves extend an invitation. But "No, not yet". The time has not come. The man must fight on. So the poem ends as it began, with effort, eternal effort to keep on top of even the natural things of life. The summer, autumn, winter images establish the poem as a cyclic one, thus indicating that nature will continue to come at man. If he is to keep on top, his effort can never cease until his end. That life demands effort is abundantly clear in Frost's poems.

* * *

To Frost life is often lived at a point where powerful forces meet. Either of these forces taken alone will warp or sometimes even destroy life. Holding these forces in equilibrium gives the most satisfactory life which this world can offer.

According to Frost, perhaps the forces between which man is caught most often are reason and desire, mind and heart. The first poem in which this opposition appeared was a 1912 poem called *Reluctance*. Four lines in this poem show that even the early Frost believed that life exists between forces created by the heart and mind, that the mind will dictate one course and the heart beg

for the opposite course. Later, other poems state explicitly that man's life is lived between these forces, these demands created by heart and mind. *Wild Grapes* is among the poems that present the point of view directly. Many other poems establish the idea implicitly, some using a dramatic and some a lyric approach. Though within the poem no comment is ever made on the situation being dramatized in *Home Burial*, the basic forces which oppose each other there are heart and mind. In *The Need of Being Versed in Country Things*, with subtle lyric tenderness the poet reveals the struggle that is ever present between mind and heart.

There are poems in Frost which show that when these forces are not kept in reasonable balance serious consequences may result: poems which show that these forces can destroy man himself if one of the forces gains too much ascendancy over the other. For example, one aspect of man craves privacy, but another craves social contacts. *The Hill Wife* demonstrates what happens when some human beings get too much privacy. Life no longer can follow a normal course: the wife disappears, the home is broken. Here, as consistently in Frost, the opposing forces are both good (as mind and heart are), but it is dangerous to allow one force to gain too much control.

It would be possible to continue with examples which would show how thoroughly impregnated is Frost's poetry with the belief that human decisions are made and actions carried out, and the forces of nature operate at a point where opposing forces converge. There is, of course, always danger at such a point, but perhaps the strength and value of the life lived is proportional to the danger, to the greatness of the forces that must be held in equilibrium, or near enough in equilibrium to avoid disaster.

* * *

When he was seventy and seventy-two, Frost published as individual books two long poems, companion works, which present a consideration of Reason and Mercy. For their ideas alone, the poems are worth separate discussion.

Long before the publication of *A Masque of Reason* (1945), Frost readers were aware of his attitude towards Reason, but the *Masque* was a direct statement of certain of his beliefs backed by the authority of the literary masterpiece of the Bible, the *Book of Job*. Because Frost's approach to life has always been essentially

empirical and nonconformist and his poems based upon observation and experience, Job was the perfect character for his poem on Reason, for Job was an empiricist and the great nonconformist of the Old Testament. On the basis of the individual human intelligence, observation, and experience, Job vigorously challenged long established and widely accepted Jewish theology, which set forth the belief that according to the covenant God had made with Israel both individuals and the nation could expect God's curse for any violation of the Law but His blessing if they kept the Law. In spite of violent opposition by his friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—who argued for following tradition, Job had the courage and the independence to declare that the simple facts of human experience must take precedence over the teachings of their forefathers, that human experience showed on earth much evil and injustice and suffering which could not be explained in terms of human conduct, and that therefore there was no absolute relation between human conduct and the fate accorded man. Even before God, Job retains his human intellectual integrity. He said, "I will maintain my own ways before him." At the end of the Book, it is made clear that God approved of Job's words and actions, for he says to Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me things that are right, as my servant Job hath." Thus God sanctions man's questioning. God has given man his mind and approves of his using it, even when its use brings uncertainty and doubt. Job's gropings were accepted, but God reproved the friends who followed the faith blindly. Job rejected the ancient and honoured explanation because it did not explain. Because his rejection was deeply sincere, not merely negative, and because his search for an explanation that would explain was sincere, not merely a search for a new theory, God accepted him as his true servant.

The poem which Frost has written is not a re-telling of the Bible story. He has retained only four of the Book's characters: Job, his wife, God, and Satan. In length, structure, style, and intent, Frost's poem has no relation to the great book of the Bible. Yet the basic ideas outlined above are very much a part of Frost's poem. Writing twenty-five hundred years after the unknown author of the *Book of Job*, Frost calls his poem *The Forty-third Chapter of Job;* that is to say, the position that Job maintains is as tenable to-day as when he opposed his friends and "maintained his own ways before" God.

A Masque of Reason does not in any way pretend to present a complete and coherent system of thought. All of Frost's poems taken together do not do that. Few poets have followed coherent systems. Even Milton in *Paradise Lost*, which was deeply influenced by Job, will not stand the analysis of a philosopher. Yet to deny that poets are philosophers is not to prove that they are not thinkers. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Dryden, Blake, Wordsworth, and some of their contemporaries and predecessors and followers certainly thought long about man and his world and his concepts of everything that surrounded him. Frost is indeed a part of this tradition. Though he has never been concerned with a system of thought, he has always been a thinking person and as a poet very much concerned with thought. The human mind is one of the two things that he admires most. Over and over within his poems he has stated and implied his admiration for the human mind, for human thought.

Frost had foreshadowed much of what is developed in detail in *A Masque of Reason* when eleven years earlier he wrote *Neither Out Far Nor in Deep*. This poem had said that man's inability to see far or deeply did not discourage his continued search. In the *Masque* Job continues man's search for answers, for understanding, regardless of what God tells him. God's first speech seems intended to stifle all argument, for He begins by thanking Job for his part in establishing the principle that

> There's no connection man can reason out
> Between his just deserts and what he gets.
> Virtue may fail and wickedness succeed . . . .
> . . . . it was of the essence of the trial
> You shouldn't understand it at the time.
> It had to seem unmeaning to have meaning . . . .
> The only free will there at first was man's,
> Who could do good or evil as he chose.
> I had no choice but I must follow him
> With forfeits and rewards he understood— . . . .
> I had to prosper good and punish evil.

Immediately after this speech Job's wife, Thyatira, enters the conversation. She, too, has questions. Soon she is asking the great human question, Why? To which God replies:

> There you go asking for the very thing
> We've just agreed I didn't have to give . . . .

She wants to know why there is still injustice.
I answer flatly: That's the way it is . . . .

Of course Job and Thyatira have not agreed not to ask why, which is a part of their very innermost nature. God tells them quite directly that

. . . . the discipline man needed most
Was to learn his submission to unreason . . . .

After one more preliminary "why", Job begins his great basic question. Here in Frost's poem is the Biblical Job who refuses to accept the explanation that does not explain. Yet, as of old, he has faith: he insists that there is an explanation that explains. He champions the human mind:

. . . . We disparage reason.
But all the time it's what we're most concerned with.
There's will as motor and there's will as brakes.
Reason is, I suppose, the steering gear.
The will as brakes can't stop the will as motor
For very long. We're plainly made to go.
We're going anyway and may as well
Have some say as to where we're headed for;
Just as we will be talking anyway
And may as well throw in a little sense.
Let's do so now. Because I let You off
From telling me Your reason, don't assume
I thought You had none. Somewhere back
I knew You had one. But this isn't it
You're giving me . . . .
I'd give more for one least beforehand reason
Than all the justifying ex-post-facto
Excuses trumped up by You for theologists.
The front of being answerable to no one
I'm with You in maintaining to the public.

Job refuses to accept the theological answer as the final absolute answer, because before man is social he is first of all personal. Job cannot believe that there is not some special reason for him alone. He refuses to believe he is not unique. His human nature demands that he maintain this position. If he was the one who received the pain and proved the theory, he of all persons should now know why. Thus, he ends his long speech with the simple question, "Why did You hurt me so?" Finally, he gets his answer, and he is so completely unprepared for it that he is stunned (as in

the Bible), but in true human fashion he immediately begins to rationalize about the answer:

I expected more
Than I could understand and what I get
Is almost less than I can understand.
But I don't mind. Let's leave it as it stood.
The point was it was none of my concern.
I stick to that. But talk about confusion! . . . . .
Yet I suppose what seems to us confusion
Is not confusion, but the form of forms . . . .

The last lines show Job's continued belief in an explanation, even though he cannot penetrate to an understanding of what he has heard. Immediately after the above speech of Job, God gives another and much fuller explanation of why he had allowed Job to suffer without cause. It was to discredit the Devil, who

thinks he can convince me
It is no different with my followers
From what it is with his. Both serve for pay.
Disinterestedness never did exist
And if it did, it wouldn't be a virtue.
Neither would fairness . . . .
. . . . He could count on no one:
That was his look out. I could count on you.
I wanted him forced to acknowledge so much.
I gave you over to him, but with safeguards . . . .

This, of course, is based on the first two chapters of the *Book of Job*, where Satan wagers with God. The argument has now returned to the point of origin and to the claim that there was and is no relation between human conduct and rewards.

The poem ends, in part, as the *Book of Job* ended, with the realization that in a limited world of human time and space man's finite mind cannot grasp the infinite, cannot comprehend the fact of human suffering and of evil and injustice in a divinely ordered world.

In the *Book of Job*, God of the whirlwind gives Job a faith based upon vision rather than reason. *A Masque of Reason* does not reach such a conclusion. Frost leaves the solution of how to go beyond injustice to the second of the masques, *A Masque of Mercy* (1947).

In its general situation, *A Masque of Mercy* is based on the *Book of Jonah*. It is the general retention of the attitude and the ideas of the Biblical account that is important, for most of the

details are completely different. Nineveh becomes modern New York, and Jonah (now Jonas Dove) takes refuge in a book store rather than a ship. Other characters of *A Masque of Mercy* are imported from other parts of the Bible. St Paul is the principal one. Paul introduces the New Testament into the search for answers. The character next in importance is My Brother's Keeper, presumably from Cain's reply to God in *Genesis*, 4, 9. The fourth character is Jesse Bel, or Jezebel, *I Kings*.

The *Book of Jonah* is the proper place to begin a study of Justice-Mercy, as Paul observes to Jonah:

> You should be an authority on Mercy.
> That book of yours in the Old Testament
> Is the first place in literature I think
> Where Mercy is explicitly the subject.

But Jonah cries out for justice. To God, Jonah explains that he fled because he knew Him to be a merciful God. This is exactly what Frost has Jonas tell his listeners:

> I've lost my faith in God to carry out
> The threats He makes against the city evil.
> I can't trust God to be unmerciful.

So again as in the days of the Old Testament, Jonas flees from God. Paul offers to explain Jonas to himself, and even give him help. Paul tells him:

> You are the universal fugitive,
> Escapist as we say, though you are not
> Running away from Him you think you are
> But from His mercy-justice contradiction.
> Mercy and justice are a contradiction.
> But here's where your evasion has an end.
> I have to tell you something that will spoil
> Indulgence in your form of melancholy
> Once and for all. I'm going to make you see
> How relatively little justice matters.

After Jonas has spoken at length of the types of destruction he had thought of threatening New York with, Paul tells him that

> It's got so prophecy
> Is a disease of your imagination.
> You're so lost in the virtuosity
> Of getting up good ruins, you've forgotten
> What the sins are men ought to perish for.

Challenged by Keeper to name one, Jonas immediately begins to

tell them of another possibility of destruction he has thought of. This confirms Paul's charge and strengthens the argument he is trying to offer. Paul then proceeds to argue that justice will be crossed, whether they like it or not, and that the choice they have is between seeing it "evil-crossed or mercy-crossed". Following much discussion and near the end of one of his long speeches, Paul introduces the next important step in the case he is building. He says, "Christ came to introduce a break with logic . . . . ." and suggests to them a reading of the Sermon on the Mount. Keeper pronounces the Sermon a "beautiful impossibility",

> An irresistible impossibility.
> A lofty beauty no one can live up to
> Yet no one turn from trying to live up to.

so that "all of us will be Thrown prostrate at the Mercy Seat for Mercy." Yet all through the *Masque*, Jonas poses troublesome questions. On one occasion he says of God:

> I don't see how it can be to His interest
> This modern tendency I find in Him
> To take the punishment out of all failure
> To be strong, careful, thrifty, diligent,
> Anything we once thought we had to be.

He asks Paul the following question:

> If what you say is true, if winning ranks
> The same with God as losing, how explain
> Our making all this effort mortals make?

These two speeches give not only the voice of Jonas but the voice of Robert Frost continuing to balance desire with reason, heart with mind. In *A Masque of Mercy*, Paul has the better of the argument; but he is never able to get Jonas to accept what he has to offer. Paul and Keeper have the final words after Jonas has passed from the scene, but to the end Jonas symbolizes the justice principle. His last lines are:

> I should have warned you, though my sense of justice
> Was about all there ever was to me.
> When that fades I fade—every time I fade.
> Mercy on me for having thought I knew.

Characteristically, Frost refuses to allow anything to remain quite pure. Thus, Jonas, who demands justice, passes with a prayer for mercy on his lips.

At the end of *A Masque of Mercy* two extremely important Frost words enter the discussion and create important implications:

courage and accomplishment. It is significant that as the curtain begins to fall Keeper does more of the talking than Paul, who is almost silenced when he fails to win Jonas.

Keeper opens the final exchanges with Paul by remarking that Jesse Bel was right when she, early in the *Masque*, said that

> The saddest thing in life
> Is that the best thing in it should be courage.

She was right, he says,

> In glorifying courage.
> Courage is of the heart by derivation.
> And great it is. But fear is of the soul . . . .

Paul The fear that you're afraid with is the fear
Of God's decision lastly on your deeds.
That is the Fear of God whereof 'tis written.

Keeper But not the fear of punishment for sin . . . .
. . . . I'm too much afraid of God to claim
I have been fighting on the angels' side.
That is for Him and not for me to say . . . .
And I can see that the uncertainty
In which we act is a severity,
A cruelty, amounting to injustice,
That nothing but God's mercy can assuage . . . .

Paul Yes, there you have it at the root of things.
We have to stay afraid deep in our souls.
Our sacrifice, the best we have to offer,
And not our worst nor second best, our best,
Our very best, our lives laid down like Jonah's,
Our lives laid down in war and peace, may not
Be found acceptable in Heaven's sight.
And that they may be is the only prayer
Worth praying. May my sacrifice
Be found acceptable in Heaven's sight.

Keeper . . . . . .
My failure is no different from Jonah's.
We both have lacked the courage in the heart
To overcome the fear within the soul
And go ahead to any accomplishment.

Courage is what it takes and takes the more of
Because the deeper fear is so eternal . . . .
Nothing can make injustice just but mercy.

In a speech late in *A Masque of Reason*, one of the questions Thyatira asks God is: ". . . . is there such a thing as Progress?" She does not give God a chance to answer, but immediately gives Job's opinion on the subject:

Job says there's no such thing as Earth's becoming
An easier place for man to save his soul in.
Except as a hard place to save his soul in,
A trial ground where he can try himself
And find out whether he is any good,
It would be meaningless. It might as well
Be Heaven at once and have it over with.

The thinking that created this passage is the same as that which furnishes the basis for the final speeches of *A Masque of Mercy*. Into its last two pages Frost has worked several of his most tenaciously held beliefs: his belief in courage, his belief that accomplishment is the goal of life, his belief in a "trial by market", and his belief that life is lived between powerful forces: mind and heart, reason and desire—seeking, respectively, justice and mercy.

The masques should not be read as consecutive poems leading to "Truth" at the end of the second. They are essentially complementary poems and should be read together and in the order in which they were published. Significantly, Frost has so written the conclusion of the second that a reader must remember that the first still poses its problems. Together they give an answer to a way of accepting life on earth, though, as always in Frost, never a final and absolute answer, but an answer which offers a solid "stay against confusion".

DRYDEN'S LETTERS

R. G. HOWARTH

DRYDEN'S letters were first collected and edited by Edmond Malone in 1800. Recently Charles E. Ward published a new edition prepared according to modern scholarly methods.[1] He was able to find only one letter (No. 5)[2] not already printed elsewhere, though he collected ten others for the first time; the final total being a meagre sixty-two. Fifteen written to Dryden by correspondents[3] swell Professor Ward's text to the bulk of 139 pages. It is well introduced and annotated.

The gaps occur in Dryden's earlier years, when it would be most interesting to learn more about him. The first letter preserved was written to his cousin Honor Dryden about 1653 from Cambridge, where he was an undergraduate. The next letter is dated by the recipient, Richard Salwey, 1664; by which time Dryden was becoming known as both a poet and a playwright. "So", writes Ward,

> in the years during which he must have been experimenting with verse, and finding a livelihood as a government employee, along with Milton and Marvell, we have not a scrap of the personal or the gossipy or the literary. Did he live precariously in London on his inheritance and his small government salary? Did he turn back to Herringman, as Shadwell years later was to charge? Did he woo Lady Elizabeth Howard in poetic accents, or was he actually hectored into marriage with her in 1663 by her brothers, as was later asserted, again by Shadwell? The answers are perhaps locked up in the letters of those years—the letters which have not yielded to the searchers of a hundred and fifty years.

Between 1664 and 1682—a period of great development for Dryden—only two letters, and these relatively uninformative, are extant: one to Rochester, written from London, and one to Dorset, from the country. Dryden was appointed Poet Laureate in 1668;

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[1] *The Letters of John Dryden, With Letters Addressed to Him*, Collected and edited by Charles E. Ward (Duke University Press, 1942).

[2] To Lord Latimer (probably Edward Osborne, Lord Latimer, 1655—1689, son of the Earl of Danby; "Viscount Latimer" was a courtesy title he held from 1674 on). The date of the letter is July 1677.

[3] Phyllis Freeman, in "William Walsh and Dryden: Recently Recovered Letters" (*Review of English Studies*, July 1948, p. 195—202) adds two more to the six from Walsh to Dryden.

he rose to his height as a dramatist and also became noted for political satire in verse; he produced a statement of his faith in *Religio Laici;* and his family of three boys grew up, one of them to become a playwright like himself. "Some of the later letters (they become more numerous after 1682)," writes Ward,

> come in runs, but not without many omissions. In this category may be placed three groups: those to and from Tonson and Walsh, and to Mrs. Steward. They are, I think, sufficiently varied to offer some interest to the reader. The Tonson correspondence provides a sort of back-scene view of the personal and business relations of the poet and his publisher. The letters in the Walsh group (five of them published here for the first time) show us Dryden the friend and mentor of aspiring young literary men.[4] And the letters to Mrs. Steward reveal another Dryden: the charming, gracious, appreciative old man talking to a young and devoted relation.

Even so, Ward does not make enough of his material—indeed is inclined to undervalue and apologize for it, fearing that it will seem "dull"; "though", he adds, "Dryden is anything but a dull man".

> The truth would seem to be that Dryden was not at all concerned with 'literary' composition when he sat down to pen a letter. The interesting topic and the polished phrase, which are often associated with the correspondence of literary men, are generally lacking. Lacking too are the confessions relating to his art: the inspiration for this poem, the genesis of that, the struggles with another . . . Had he talked more about himself and his work, we should doubtless have a far easier task to understand him . . .

Yet,

> thin as many of the letters are with regard to biographical details, they form almost the only real source for a study of the man.[5]

Now, in the first place, the letters are not dull. Ward seems to be expecting too much of Dryden: he wishes him to have written about himself and his work, and in the manner of eighteenth-century epistolary artists like Horace Walpole, who had one eye on publication. The truth is that Dryden wrote letters merely as such, for particular purposes of business or out of kinship, friendship or courtesy, and they sufficiently answer their ends—indeed, they do so with grace. He was evidently not one to talk unduly about himself:

[4] See, further, the new letters from Walsh to Dryden printed by Miss Freeman in the article already cited; also her summary on page 202.

[5] At the request of John Aubrey, the biographical collector, Dryden promised a personal account, but apparently he never fulfilled this promise.

we are told that in company he preferred to sit and listen to others[6]. But he must have been observing, noting, recording and ruminating, and the fruits of his thoughtful silence are no doubt to be found in his plays, verse, and prose. The writer whose works are based largely on the study of men in their social intercourse must usually be rather like this: Shakespeare apparently behaved in the same way; so, too, did Hardy. The talkative man is the one who tends to make himself the subject of his own writings. Yet many remarks, descriptions and phrases in these letters of Dryden's reveal intellect, humour, and a natural expressiveness, bringing them within the range of literature.

In the second place, the letters yield the imprint of the personality of a man unassuming, candid and well-disposed towards others—so agreeable as almost to pass without notice, as he did in person. Almost, I say, because his own modesty and the generosity of his praise of others alone call attention directly to him as a man. In illustration of the former quality there is his well-known letter to his cousin Mrs Steward, of "Candlemass-Day, 1698" (i.e. 1699), containing the passage:

> betwixt my intervalls of physique and other remedies which I am useing for my gravell, I am still drudging on: always a Poet, and never a good one. I pass my time sometimes with Ovid, and sometimes with our old English poet, Chaucer; translating such stories as best please my fancy; and intend besides them to add somewhat of my own: so that it is not impossible, but ere the summer be pass'd, I may come to you with a volume in my hand, like a dog out of the water, with a duck in his mouth.

The volume so unpretendingly heralded was the great *Fables*, published in folio in the following year. The latter quality, his generosity, may be exemplified by his commendation to Dorset of Thomas Rymer's long critical essay, *On the Tragedies of the Last Age* (that is, the age of Shakespeare), which, he says, is

> certainly very learned, & the best piece of Criticism in the English tongue; perhaps in any other of the modern. If I am not altogether of his opinion, I am so, in most of what he sayes: and thinke my selfe happy that he has not fallen upon me, as severely and as wittily as he has upon Shakespeare, and Fletcher. for he is the only man I know capable of finding out a poets

[6] "My conversation is slow and dull; my humour saturnine and reserved; in short, I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company, or make reparties" (*A Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*).

blind sides: and if he can hold heere without exposeing his Edgar[7] to be censurd by his Enemyes; I thinke there is no man will dare to answer him, or can.

And this, in the later summer or early autumn of 1677, from the author of the *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1668) and the finest critical prefaces yet known in England! (Later, in 1694, he censured Rymer's attitude to Shakespeare and he prepared "Heads of an Answer to Rymer".) But even more noteworthy and more characteristic is his often-quoted tribute to Etherege:

I will never enter the lists in Prose with the undoubted best Author of it w^ch^ our nation has produc'd.[8]

The first sketches—not designed as such, but just jottings of thoughts—or parallel notings of some of Dryden's literary compositions, too, are to be found in these letters. Here, for instance, is the original of the portrait of the Duke of Buckingham as Zimri in *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1681 (to Rochester, c. May 1, 1673):

I hope your Lordship will not omit the occasion of laughing at the Great Duke of B—— who is so oneasy to [him] self by pursueing the honour of Lieutenant Generall which flyes him, that he can enjoy nothing he possesses. Though at the same time, he is so unfit to command an Army, that he is the onely Man in the three Nations who does not know it. Yet he still picques him self, like his father, to find another Isle of Rhe in Zealand: thinkes this dissappointment an injury to him which is indeed a favour, and will not be satisfyed but with his owne ruine and with ours. Tis a strange quality in a man to love idlenesse so well as to destroy his Estate by it; and yet at the same time to pursue so violently the most toilesome, and most unpleasant part of businesse. These observations would run easily into lampoon, if I had not forsworn that dangerous part of wit, not so much out of good nature, But at least from the inborn vanity of poets. I should show it to others, and betray my self to a worse mischief than what I do give my Enemy.

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[7] A tragedy.

[8] February 16, 1687. Etherege replied (10/20 March 1686/7, from "Ratisbonne"): "Tho' I have not been able formerly to forbear playing the fool in verse and prose I have now judgement enough to know how much I ventur'd, and am rather amaz'd at my good fortune, than vain upon a little success, and did I not see my own error, the commendation you give me wou'd be enough to perswade me of it . . . it wou'd be a pretty thing for a man, who has learn'd of his own head to scrape on the fiddle to enter the list with the greatest Master in the Science of Musick—it is not to contend with you in writing but to vie with you in kindness, that makes me fond of your Correspondence . . ."

Was Dryden nevertheless impelled to shape the paradoxes of Buckingham's nature into rhymed couplets? Was his "character" of the man written then and afterwards worked into *Absalom and Achitophel?*

Again, in that letter to Mrs Steward quoted before, a connexion with his literary composition is found (though it has been missed by Ward). He begins:

> Old Men are not so insensible of beauty, as it may be, you young ladies think. For my own part, I must needs acknowledge that your fair eyes had made me your slave before I received your fine presents.[9]

Does it not remind us of the affirmation in the opening of *Cymon and Iphigenia* (from Boccaccio):[10]

> *Poeta loquitur*
>
> Old as I am, for Ladies Love unfit,
> The Pow'r of Beauty I remember yet,
> Which once inflam'd my Soul, and still inspires my Wit?

No doubt if we troubled to compare the letters with the works in greater detail we should find more such echoes or first soundings, especially in relation to the *Fables*.

Some further personal references may be collected. To Rochester Dryden had confessed in himself "the inborn vanity of poets"; which is really, in the first place, a natural desire to show someone else what one has made, and in him could never have been accompanied by self-satisfaction and expectation of nothing but praise. Here are some other remarks:

> *From the same letter, just above the part on Buckingham, of Rochester in country sequestration:* "You may thinke of what you please, and that as little as you please; (for in my opinion), thinking it selfe, is a kind of paine to a witty man [i.e. a poet?]; he finds so much more in it to disquiet, than to please him."
>
> *To Etherege, Feb.* 16, 1687 (*apologizing for not answering a letter for three weeks):* "O thou immortal source of Idleness (you see I

[9]Compare the preceding letter of "The first day of Winter, 1698" to the Duchess (not the Duke) of Ormond, who, he says in compliment, has taken more beauty to Ireland than she has left behind: "if we have another Such a yeare we shall have a famine of Beauty as well as Bread, for if the last be the Staff of Life to the rest of the World the first is so to the Nation of Poets; who feed only at the eyes." (See also *Cymon and Iphigenia,* lines 39—41). The *Fables* was dedicated to the Duke of Ormond, *Palamon and Arcite* to the Duchess.

The genuineness of this letter is thus indubitable. (See Pierre Legouis, "Dryden's Letter to 'Ormond' ", in *Modern Language Notes,* February 1951, p. 88—92.)

[10]*Fables.*

am ready to make prayers to you, and invoke you by your darling attribute), pardon a poor creature who is your image, & whom no gratitude, no consideration of friendship no letters tho' never so elegantly written can oblige to take up the penn, tho' it be to manage it half an hour. for while I am writing this, I have layd it down and almost concluded with an imperfect sentence [space] I am almost lazy enough to get a Stamp for my name like the King of France w^ch^ indeed wou'd be to be great in idleness— I have made my Court to the King once in seaven moneths, have seen my Lord Chamberlain full as often. I believe if they think of me at all, they imagine I am very proud but I am gloriously lazy . . . . I forget every thing to enjoy nothing that is myself . . . ."

From the same letter: "ask me not of Love. for every man hates every man perfectly, & women are still the same Bitches". (?)

To John Dennis, ?March, 1694: "I detest his [Mr Rymer's] Ill Nature and his Arrogance. I indeed, and such as I, have reason to be afraid of him, but Shakespear has not."

Again: "we poor Poets Militant (to use Mr Cowley's Expression)[11] are at the Mercy of Wretched Scribblers: And when they cannot fasten upon our Verses, they fall upon our Morals, our Principles of State and Religion. For my Principles of Religion, I will not justifie them to you. I know yours are far different. For the same Reason I shall say nothing of my Principles of State. I believe you in yours follow the Dictates of your Reason, as I in mine do those of my Conscience. If I thought my self in an Error, I would retract it; I am sure that I suffer for them; and Milton makes even the Devil say, That no Creature is in love with Pain. For my Morals, betwixt Man and Man, I am not to be own Judge. I appeal to the World if I have Deceiv'd or Defrauded any Man: And for my private Conversation, they who see me every day can be the best Witnesses, whether or no it be Blameless and Inoffensive. Hitherto I have no reason to complain that Men of either Party shun my Company. I have never been an Impudent Beggar at the Doors of Noblemen: My Visits have indeed been too rare to be unacceptable; and but just enough to testifie my Gratitude for their Bounty, which I have frequently received, but always unask'd, as themselves will Witness. I have written more than I needed to you on this Subject: For I dare say you justifie me to your selfe."

To Mrs Steward, Nov. 7, 1699 (*in reference to his efforts to obtain subsistence from the Government*): "the Court rather speaks kindly

[11] In *On the Death of Mr. Crashaw;* not noted by Ward.

of me, than does any thing for me, though they promise largely: & perhaps they think I will advance, as they go backward: in which they will be much deceivd: for I can never go an Inch beyond my Conscience & my Honour. If they will consider me as a Man, who have done my best to improve the Language, & Especially the Poetry, & will be content with my acquiescence under the present Government, and forbearing satire on it, that I can promise, because I can perform it: but I can neither take the Oaths, nor forsake my Religion, because I know not what Church to go to, if I leave the Catholique; they are all so divided amongst them selves in matters of faith, necessary to Salvation: & yet all assumeing the name of Protestants. May God be pleasd to open your Eyes, as he has opnd mine: Truth is but one; & they who have once heard of it, can plead no Excuse, if they do not embrace it. But these things are too serious, for a trifling Letter."

There is a series of three kindly answers to Elizabeth Thomas, a young poetic aspirant, and—unknown to him—adventuress,[12] who becomes in the last "Fair Corinna". These may be put alongside the letters to Mrs Steward. "Your Verses were, I thought," he told Miss Thomas in the first (November 12, 1699), after reading what she had sent him for comment,

> too good to be a Woman's; some of my Friends to whom I read them were of the same Opinion. 'Tis not over gallant, I must confess, to say this of the fair Sex; but most certain it is, that they generally write with more Softness than Strength. On the contrary, you want neither Vigour in your Thoughts, nor force in your Expressions, nor Harmony in your Numbers, and methinks I find much of Orinda[13] in your Manner (to whom I had the Honour to be related, and also to be Known).

In the same month of November, 1699, he wrote, to her, of poetry:

> 'Tis an unprofitable Art, to those who profess it; but you, who write only for your Diversion, may pass your Hours with Pleasure in it, and without Prejudice, always avoiding (as I know you will) the Licenses which Mrs Behn allowed herself, of writing loosely, and giving (if I may have leave to say so) some Scandal to the Modesty of her Sex. I confess, I am [the?] last Man who ought, in Justice to arraign her, who have been myself too much a Libertine in most of my Poems, which I should be well contented I had Time either to purge or to see them fairly burned. But

[12]See George Woodcock, *The Incomparable Aphra* [*Behn*], page 89.
[13]Katherine Philips.

this I need not say to you, who are too well born, and too well principled, to fall into that Mire.

From this and preceding instances it is evident that the personal, in Dryden's writing, inevitably leads on to the literary. Notable is the exchange with Pepys, whom he had known at Cambridge, but who was now (1699) an old retired Civil Servant, living in honour, surrounded by books and curios, so wealthy and distinguished as to be addressed by Dryden as "Padron Mio". On July 14 Dryden wrote to him:[14]

I remember, last year, when I had the honour of dineing with you, you were pleased to recommend to me the Character of Chaucer's Good Parson.[15] Any desire of yours is a Command to me; and accordingly I have put it into my English, with such Additions and alterations as I thought fit. Having translated as many fables from Ovid, and as many Novills from Boccace and Tales from Chaucer, as will make an indifferent large Volume in Folio, I intend them for the Press in Michaelmass Term next. In the mean time My parson desires the favour of being known to you, and promises, if you find any fault in his Character, He will reform it. Whenever you please, He shall wait on you, and for the safer conveyance, I will carry him in my pocket who am

My padrons most Obedient Servant,
John Dryden

Pepys replied on the same day:

Sir, you truly have oblig'd mee; and possibly in saying soe, I am more in earnest then you can readily thinke; as verily hopeing from this your copy of one Good Parson, to fancy some amends made mee for the hourly offence I beare with, from the sight of soe many lewd Originalls.

I shall with great pleasure attend you on this occasion, when ere you'l permitt it; unlesse you would have the kindnesse to double it to mee, by suffering my Coach to wayte on you (and who you can gayne mee the same favour from) hither, to a cold Chicken and a Sallade, any Noone after Sunday, as being just stepping into the Ayre for 2 Days.

I am most respectfully
Your honoured and obedient Servant,
S.P.

[4]Ward was unable to collate the text of Dryden's letter to Pepys with the original in the Pepysian Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge. And he was unaware that the answer, too, was to be found therein. The above are texts from my *Letters and the Second Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 1932, p. 280—1.
[5]The "Poure Persoun" in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*.

Thus the matter probably formed the subject of conversation at dinner. "The Character of a Good Parson. Imitated from Chaucer and inlarg'd", duly appeared in *Fables Ancient and Modern: Translated into Verse, from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, and Chaucer*, in 1700. Perhaps, during their discussion of the character, Pepys further suggested to Dryden a satiric portrait of the bad parson of their time, to whom he refers in his letter, for in the Preface to the *Fables* the poet hints that he may, "if I shall think fit hereafter",

> describe another sort of Priests, such as are more easily to be found than the Good Parson.

Some extracts from Dryden's letters affording comments on his own work or on topical literary matters, follow.

> *To Lord Latimer, July* 1677 (*on "Mr. Limberham Or, The kind Keeper"*): "The Kings Comedy lyes in the Sudds till you please to send me into Northamptonshyre; it will be almost such another piece of businesse as the fond Husband,[16] for such the King will have it, who is parcell poet with me in the plott; one of the designes being a story he was pleased formerly to tell me; and therefore I hope he will keep the jeast in countenance by laughing at it."
>
> *To Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester, First Lord of the Treasury, ?August* 1683, *appealing for "half a yeares pention for my necessityes":* "'Tis enough for one Age to have neglected Mr Cowley, and sterv'd Mr Butler; but neither of them had the happiness to live till your Lordship's Ministry."
>
> *To Dennis, ?March* 1694*:* "I remember Poor Nat. Lee, who was then upon the Verge of Madness, yet made a Sober, and a Witty Answer to a Bad Poet, who told him, *It was an easie thing to write like a Madman: No*, said he, *'tis very difficult to write like a Madman, but 'tis a very easie matter to write like a fool.*"
>
> *To the Right Honourable Charles Montague, prob. October* 1699*:* "My thoughts at present are fixd on Homer: And by my translation of the first Iliad; I find him a Poet more according to my Genius than Virgil: and consequently hope I may do him more justice, in his fiery way of writeing; which, as it is liable to more faults, so it is capable of more beauties, than the exactness, & sobriety of Virgil. Since 'tis for my Country's honour as well as for my own, that I am willing to undertake this task; I despair not of being encouragd in it, by your favour . . . ."

[16] *A Fond Husband*, by Thomas D'Urfey, May 1676.

To Mrs Steward, December 14, 1699: "The King's Proclamation against vice and profaneness is issued out in print: but a deep disease is not to be cur'd with a slight Medicine. The parsons who must read it, will find as little effect from it, as from their dull Sermons: tis a Scare-Crow, w^{ch} will not fright many birds from preying on the fields & orchards."

Humour, as evidenced here, is never far distant from Dryden's pen. Finally, then, some extracts of a humorous or satirical tenor may be assembled.

To Dorset, late summer or early autumn 1677: "I am now settled in the Country; & haveing given two or three dayes to idlenesse, parsons, & my Cousin's [Elmes Steward's?] discourse, which is the worst of the three evills, am goeing to drudge for the winter . . . . my Cousin is to be managd As I please; being sufficiently easy as well in all other things as in his understanding: he talkes nothing all day long to me in French & Italian to show his breeding."

To Mrs Steward, November 23, 1698: "After I had lost the happiness of your Company, I cou'd expect no other than the loss of my health, which follow'd, according to the proverb, that Misfortunes seldome come alone. I had no woman to visite, but the Parson's wife; & she who was intended by Nature, as a help meet for a deaf Husband, was somewhat of the loudest, for my Conversation; & for other things, I will say no more, than that she is just your Contrary: and an Epitome of her own Country. My Journey to London, was yet more unpleasant than my abode at Tichmarsh: for the Coach was Crowded up with an old woman, fatter than any of my Hostesses on the Rode. . . . Her weight made the Horses travell very heavily; but to give them a breathing time, she wou'd often stop us; & plead some necessity of Nature, & tell us we were all flesh and blood: but she did this so frequently, that at last we conspird against her; & that she might not be inconvenienc'd by staying in the Coach, turnd her out in a very dirty place, where she was to wade up to the Anckles, before she cou'd reach the next hedge. When I was ridd of her, I came sick home."

If there is an element of cruelty in his treatment of the old woman the injury to his health by the protraction of the journey provides the excuse.

It will be seen, then, that Dryden's letters, relatively few and

brief and undetailed as they are, are yet full of interest to the student of the man and his work. Furthermore, they show the merits of a natural style, and in many a phrase and cadence the ear of a poet trained too in "the other harmony of Prose" (as, in the Preface to the *Fables*, he called it) manifests itself:

> "I will never enter the lists in Prose with the undoubted best Author of it w^{ch} our nation has produc'd,"
>
> "Tis enough for one Age to have neglected Mr Cowley, and sterv'd Mr Butler; but neither of them had the happiness to live till your Lordship's Ministry."
>
> "I am still drudging on: always a Poet, and never a good one . . ."

Nothing that Dryden wrote could be without at least a touch of distinction, and indeed the letter to Etherege, alone, would suffice to place him with that easy artist among the good if not among the best letter-writers of his age.

ON THE SCOPE OF THE PRELUDE

F. H. LANGMAN

POETS have a unique importance for their contemporaries. Good poetry of course is timeless, but the poetry of our own age speaks to us with special urgency, special immediacy and power. It tells us of timeless things in the language, in the imagery, of our own time. It seeks the timeless, the essential, in our own experience. That is why T. S. Eliot or D. H. Lawrence or W. B. Yeats can so seize upon the imagination of young people, why with all their obscurities they are excellent to set for university courses and other introductory courses in the study of poetry. They have a first-handness that not even Donne can have, not even Shakespeare. Although it is unfashionable to say so, I think that Wordsworth has this kind of special importance for us. Wordsworth's experience as he understood it was very close to our own. He lived through the great events that changed the world into the world as we know it, and his response to those changes was sure enough, showed enough mastery of them, to make him more important for us than any other English poet between his time and our own century—more important even than Blake. Wordsworth more than any other helps us to understand the creation of our time, and therefore to understand ourselves.

Wordsworth's long life witnessed the main events that brought about what we call the modern world. His was an era of revolutions: philosophical, political, industrial. Out of it came the two institutions that perhaps most importantly characterize the modern world and make it different from anything in the past: the modern City, and the Modern State.

In Book VII of *The Prelude* Wordsworth describes city life with a vividness and wealth of detail unapproached by anything I know of in our literature. Not even modern urban novelists convey so intensely a sense of the thronging, teeming diversity of men and moods that make up life in a great city. If ultimately Wordsworth rejects that life, his description of it is perfectly fair. His attitudes are as various as the things he describes. The city is seen through the eyes of a very young man, not at all the self-centred egoist he is sometimes thought to be, but passionately interested in every sort of other man, exploring with eager fascination into every detail of

the throbbing life around him. He makes no effort to order the details, to sift them, to separate out the significant ones. His description is simply a tremendous catalogue; the whole experience passes before his eyes in all its myriad chaotic images. He does not try, as more recent poets have done, to condense, to capture the essential quality of this life, while blurring or excluding details; he seldom uses symbols: and yet the very unselective simplicity of his method gives this book considerable power. If anything, it is more true than later poetry to life in modern cities, because it does convey the multiplicity, the bewildering and frightening variety, of an experience that none of us can hope to order, to see as a whole. This effect is no accident. Wordsworth sums up Book VII in his description of Bartholomew Fair:

> Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
> Of what the mighty City is herself
> To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
> Living amid the same perpetual whirl
> Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
> To one identity, by differences
> That have no law, no meaning, and no end—
> Oppression, under which even highest minds
> Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.[1]

In the end Wordsworth does condemn the city, but not because he has a sentimental preference for rustic life. His criticism reaches the centre of our characteristic modern consciousness. We tend to think of ourselves as anonymous units in a society too vast and too complex for us to see any pattern in it. Life rushes by us, whirls by us, whirls us along, jostling, turning, somersaulting. Our society is not organic, or does not look organic from where we are in its midst. It has no concerted direction, offers no common goals, but a thousand hands each day thrust upon us new pleasures, new temptations, new aims. Society gives no common purpose, but each man looks for purposes of his own, all values become relative, and existence seems meaningless.

A comparison enables us to see exactly what Wordsworth achieved. Put the following lines next to the opening stanza of Blake's *London:*

> How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
> Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
> Unto myself, 'The face of every one

[1] *The Prelude*, ed. E. de Sélincourt, O.U.P., 1926. Bk. VII, p. 257, lines 722—730.

That passes by me is a mystery!'
Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
Until the shapes before my eyes became
A second-sight procession, such as glides
Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond
The reach of common indication, lost
Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare)
Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest
Wearing a written paper, to explain
His story, whence he came, and who he was.
Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round
As with the might of waters; an apt type
This label seemed of the utmost we can know,
Both of ourselves and of the universe;
And, on the shape of that unmoving man,
His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
As if admonished from another world.[2]

Blake's poem begins:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.[3]

"Wander" here conveys the freedom of the poet. Though deeply moved, he functions as an observer; and because he remains outside he is able to express indignation and pity. Such simple emotions are impossible to a modern poet. He may play the observer, too, but he is enmeshed in what he sees:

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.[4]

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[2] *The Prelude*, Bk. VII, p. 251, lines 626—649.
[3] *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. G. Keynes, Nonesuch Press, p. 75.
[4] "The Waste Land". T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems* 1909—1935, Faber, p. 63.

Pushed up momentarily by that human tide, his honesty denies him the superiority of pitying the crowd. The sickness that he condemns is his own sickness, and his moralizing is bitter with self-reproach and despair:

"You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

Wordsworth stands between Blake and Eliot, on the threshold of our world: more modern—more involved—than Blake, less modern than Eliot. Where a later poet would allow his symbol to stand by itself and make its effect, Wordsworth explains it:

. . . . an apt type
This label seemed of the utmost we can know.
Both of ourselves and of the universe . . . .

Used to a more elliptical poetry, we may feel that this is too explicit and disperses intensity; but then we miss the point. Wordsworth's mind moves deliberately, not abruptly and violently. It has a coolness, a collectedness, that carries the note of sanity into our fever. But although Wordsworth is able to withdraw from that nightmare procession, he has been submerged in it as Blake had not, and presents us from the inside with one of the most disturbing commonplaces of our daily lives. Few sensitive people nowadays can have escaped the sensation of being caught in a directionless throng, of going forward with the crowd, neither a voluntary nor an involuntary movement; and few escape the impression of being one of the crowd yet isolated, of having no contact with the people on every side. The feeling, if not the sentence, haunts us constantly:

. . . The face of every one
That passes by me is a mystery!

Political life in our time seems characterized by the individual's sense of being powerless, isolated, and ignorant. The great political events are usually too large and complex, too frightful and remote, for us to feel personally implicated. We know that outrageous things happen, somewhere, to someone. We read of them and shake our heads: but unless they happen directly to ourselves, they seem unreal and our responses are empty and numbed. The best modern political poetry strives to accept honestly the inadequacy of individual men before the developments of history; it forswears righteous attitudes as cheap; it confesses its numbness:

We are closed in, and the key is turned
On our uncertainty; somewhere

A man is killed or a house burned,
Yet no clear fact to be discerned . . . .[5]

In the difference between what we think we ought to feel and what we actually do feel, we discern how overwhelming these events are. Few poems convey this numbness of response as clearly and powerfully as the lines in which Wordsworth describes his visit to Paris after the September massacres:

. . . . to Paris I returned,
And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,
The spacious city, and in progress passed
The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,
Associate with his children and his wife
In bondage; and the palace, lately stormed
With roar of cannon by a furious host.
I crossed the square (an empty area then!)
Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain
The dead upon the dying heaped, and gazed
On this and other spots, as doth a man
Upon a volume whose contents he knows
Are memorable, but from him locked up,
Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,
And half upbraids their silence . . .[6]

As a counterpart to the sense of individual powerlessness, our political life creates a generalized terror. We do not believe that the world is orderly, that men are innately sane and decent. We are aware of a pervading, cataclysmic evil, and we see this evil entrenching itself. In many countries this terror has come to be identified with the State, and men do not fear outlaws, they fear the police. They fear the knock on the door in the middle of the night, the secret summons. Wordsworth witnessed the beginnings of this state of affairs, and with characteristic centrality of insight he discerned what was most disruptive: that the most ordinary healthful acts of life are poisoned, no man sleeps easy. A dammed up, primitive cruelty in men has been let loose, not in occasional tyrants but in whole populations. After the lines quoted above, Wordsworth continues:

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[5]"The Stare's Nest by My Window": W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, Macmillan, p. 230.

[6]*The Prelude*, Bk. X, p. 363, lines 48—63.

. . . . . But that night
I felt most deeply in what world I was,
What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.
High was my room and lonely, near the roof
Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge
That would have pleased me in more quiet times;
Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres
Divided from me by one little month,
Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up
From tragic fictions or true history,
Remembrances and dim admonishments.
The horse is taught his manage, and no star
Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
For the spent hurricane the air provides
As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
But to return out of its hiding-place
In the great deep; all things have second birth;
The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
And in this way I wrought upon myself,
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,
To the whole city, 'Sleep no more.' The trance
Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;
But vainly comments of a calmer mind
Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.[7]

Not many people, I suppose, can still feel much interest in Wordsworth's defection from the Revolutionary cause. Apart from conjectures on the psychological effects of his love affair in France, we are content to think of him as a lost leader and do not want to be taken through the tedious rights and wrongs. We care, some of us, for his poetry, and consider the politics irrelevant and out of date; but I suggest that by thinking in this way we lose something of value. If we rid ourselves of the prejudices of Victorian progressives, Wordsworth's "apostasy" appears in a new light. We, too, have

[7]ibid., Bk. X, p. 363, lines 63—93.

our God that Failed. The French Revolution at first seemed to Wordsworth merely the fulfilment of a promise, which later he saw would not be fulfilled. He abandoned the Revolution only after the Revolution abandoned its ideals. The conflict of loyalties he went through is agonizingly familiar to men of goodwill now, and makes his clear sight especially valuable. It is difficult to choose loyalty to principles, instead of to the persons or places with which those principles have been associated. It is even more difficult to hold firm to principles that seem discredited by the enormities committed in their name. Wordsworth made a very clear distinction, the importance of which will not be missed by readers of this journal. Sickened by the carnage of the Revolution, he refused to be sickened by Liberty. He saw that the blame belonged not to the new freedom but to the old oppression. If men have been ill-treated and brutalized for centuries, they do not become angels as soon as they are liberated. A price must be paid:

> . . . . . When a taunt
> Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
> Saying, 'Behold the harvest that we reap
> From popular government and equality,'
> I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
> Of wild belief engrafted on their names
> By false philosophy had caused the woe,
> But a terrific reservoir of guilt
> And ignorance filled up from age to age,
> That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
> But burst and spread in deluge through the land.[8]

The French Revolution, I have said, at first seemed to Wordsworth ıe fulfilment of a promise. It would, he thought, bring into being n ideal world. Such an ideal world is presented all through *The relude* as a contrast to what he saw the world actually becoming in ondon and subsequently in France itself. It was no abstract ideal. e had lived in such a world:

> . . . . Born in a poor district, and which yet
> Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
> Than any other nook of English ground,
> It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
> Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
> The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
> Was vested with attention or respect

id., Bk. X, p. 387, lines 470—480.

Through claims of wealth or blood; . . . .
Add unto this, subservience from the first
To presences of God's mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,
And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
And mountain liberty. It could not be
But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!
If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
In part lay here, that unto me the events
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
A gift that was come rather late than soon.[9]

It was a world in which man could live creatively, all his faculties in harmony with one another and all his activities in harmony with his surroundings. His ideal is similar to Blake's and to Lawrence's and, like Blake, Wordsworth called such a creative harmony the Imagination. Like both Blake and Lawrence, Wordsworth saw the harmony of man's spirit destroyed by modern life: his senses blunted by life in cities; his sympathies numbed, his feelings impoverished by a tyranny of the rational intellect—the "mind-forg'd manacles" Blake had heard in London's streets. And like Blake, too, he thought of Imagination as the instrument of man's redemption. Through Imagination man could recover innocence and re-enter Paradise.

The Prelude is, in fact, a curious version of Paradise found and lost. Wordsworth evidently saw parallels between his own preoccupations and the themes of *Paradise Lost*. He echoed *Paradise Lost* in order to draw attention to the resemblances, and thus underline his own themes. *The Prelude* traces a spiritual history from a world of innocence through the discovery of evil to a re-acceptance of life on the new terms. The world of Wordsworth's childhood, the state of harmony between man and nature which it typifies, is equated in the poem to Milton's Eden before the Fall. Thus in Book VIII, after a description of "Gehol's famous Gardens", he writes:

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[9]ibid., Bk. IX, p. 321, lines 215—222, 233—248.

But lovelier far than this, the paradise
Where I was reared; in Nature's primitive gifts
Favoured no less, and more to every sense
Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
The elements, and seasons as they change,
Do find a worthy fellow-labourer there—
Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object; by his wants,
His comforts, native occupations, cares,
Cheerfully led to individual ends
Or social, and still followed by a train
Unwooed, unthought-of even—simplicity,
And beauty, and inevitable grace.[10]

The French revolutionists, with their ruthless abstractions, are described in phrases that echo Milton's descriptions of Satan and his followers:

. . . . . hubbub wild!
And hissing Factionists with ardent eyes,
In knots, or pairs . . . .[11]
. . . . . Tyrants, strong before
In devilish pleas were ten times stronger now . . . .
. . . . . the faith of those . . . who throned
The human Understanding paramount
And made of that their God, the hopes of those
Who were content to barter short-lived pangs
For a paradise of ages . . . .[12]

Wordsworth's own revolutionary ardour appears as a wish to restore to the whole world the innocence and eagerness of his childhood:

Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,
The beauty wore of promise—that which sets
(As at some moments might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full blown.[13]

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[10] ibid., Bk. VII, p. 269, lines 98—105.
[11] ibid Bk. IX, p. 311, lines 57—60.
[12] ibid., Bk. X, p. 379, lines 333—345.
[13] ibid., Bk. XI, p. 401, lines 117—121.

If my arguments in this essay have been valid, we may conclude that a radical re-estimate of *The Prelude* is called for. Instead of considering it the quarry of biographers and anthologists we may come to see it as a poem surprisingly coherent in structure, epic in conception, and modern in theme. It is the nearest thing we have to a truly modern epic.

THE TEMPEST: A RECONSIDERATION OF ITS MEANING

BRIAN W. ROSE

THE use of magic in *The Tempest* has provided Shakespearean commentators with the ground-work of much criticism, despite the fact that his employment of the supernatural in this play was by no means a new departure. In this they were undoubtedly right, for in no other play has magic been so important or so structurally functional. It would be tedious to recall the great deal of scholarly effort that litters the variorum editions in a vain attempt to discover the *actual* tempest that not only suggested the title but to some extent the motivation of the action as well. Perhaps it is symptomatic of our age and method that every investigator has overlooked the crucial fact that the storm that separated Alonso from his fleet and bore his ship to Prospero's island was a *magic* storm raised by sorcery. Only when such a storm has been discovered can we hope to match Shakespeare's own treatment. And although this may at first appear a ridiculous task, just such a magical storm had occurred some twenty years before the play was written, and it is almost inconceivable that Shakespeare would not have known about it. I shall show that it exposed treason, that it supplied a king with material for a book and Shakespeare with material for a play.

When King James VI of Scotland married Anne of Denmark by royal proxy on 20 August 1589, he was twenty-three years of age. The sixteen-year-old Princess made an unsuccessful attempt to cross to Scotland. Storms prevented her; and so, whilst the lovelorn James was writing poetry for his bride, the Danish monarch was busily hanging the witches who had imperilled his daughter's life on the high sea. At this juncture James decided to go over to Denmark and bring back his young queen himself. Despite opposition and the procrastination of officials, he pressed forward with his plans. In a letter to his people he remarked on the tardiness of the Earl of Bothwell, his nearest blood relation, and a man who undoubtedly had a very close claim to the throne should James die without issue. This Bothwell, restored to favour after an abortive rebellion, had been named as Admiral; but, as the King informed his people in the letter, "his preparations took so long a time that I

was forced to call the Council."[1] James seems to have found Bothwell's dalliance more frustrating than suspicious, and so, taking his Chancellor, he set out on 22 October. The wedding was celebrated without proxies, and the festivities delayed the royal pair until April. It was 1 May 1590 when Anne landed in Scotland.

In the same year the authorities, investigating an allegation of witchcraft, found the matter sufficiently disconcerting to refer the case to the King. A letter from the witches of North Berwick to those of Leith called on the latter to "warne the rest of the sisteris to raise the wind this day att eleavin houris, to stay the Queen's cuming in Scotland."[2] A preliminary examination had revealed the bitter enmity of the Devil for the King, for the Accursed One had apparently played no small part in the plot. It would appear that the King's interest, once aroused, continued through the whole trial, for he was present in person most of the time. "This aforesaide witch Agnis Sampson which was the elder Witch, was taken and brought before the Kings Maiestie", comments the writer of *Newes from Scotland*, adding later of the confessions that they "made the King in a wonderful admiration."[3] James had genuine cause for interest when another witch, Agnis Tompson, declared that the Devil himself did "greatlye enveighe against the King of Scotland . . . ."[4] Magic aside, here was treason. Soon it was revealed that the ancient magic use of a wax figure had been employed too, the Devil presenting it to the assembled witches, who passed it from hand to hand, saying "This is King James VIth ordained to be consumed at the instance of a noble man,Francis Earl of Bothwell."[5] James never doubted the power of magic. Few did, and sceptics like Reginald Scot, whose *Discoverie of Witchcraft* was an essay in the rational, were so rare as to evoke popular contempt. James had Scot's work burnt shortly after his accession to the English throne. If the revelation of his cousin's perfidy shocked him during the trial, he must have seen in retrospect the pattern of his treason. There had been the earlier rebellion. There had been the sabotage of the royal wedding plans. And now came the resort to witchcraft. If James guessed that Bothwell was opposed to his marriage because the birth of an heir would ruin the Earl's hopes of possible kingship, he probably guessed rightly. He was therefore in the right frame

[1]Charles Williams, *James I* (London, Barker, 1951), p. 100.
[2]ibid., p. 106.
[3]*Newes from Scotland* (Bodley Head Quarto IX, 1924), p. 12—14.
[4]ibid., p. 14.
[5]Williams, *James I*, p. 108.

of mind to accept almost uncritically the testimony of Agnis Tompson who admitted making a magic storm to destroy the King. It was this storm, according to the witness, that was "the cause that the Kinges Maiesties Ship at his comming foorth of Denmarke, had a contrary winde to the rest of his Ships, then being in his companye, *as the Kinges Maiestie acknowledgeth*, for when the rest of the Shippes had a faire and good winde, then was the winde contrarye and altogither against his Maiestie."[6] Here, then, was a *magic* tempest. It is recorded in evidence in a State Trial, and confirmed (as my italics indicate) by the King himself.

If this extraordinary revelation is compared with the opening of *The Tempest*, it will be noticed that (*a*) in either case the storm is raised by magic, (*b*) only the ship carrying the King is storm-tossed; the remainder of the fleet, in both cases, continues unaware of the predicament of the royal person, (*c*) in both the witches' storm and in the play the person of the King is unharmed. A further point arises in Agnis Tompson's confession that "his Maiestie had neuer come safelye from the Sea, if his faith had not preuailed aboue their ententions."[6] This tribute to the King's religious zeal finds an echo in Gonzalo's statement: "The King and Prince at prayers, let's assist them."[7]

James had good cause to abhor witchcraft, and although he had necessarily to maintain the Protestant dogma and construe this degenerate survival of a once noble fertility cult as the work of the Devil, he was able in 1597 to publish his *Daemonologie*, a passionate counter-blast to Scot's calm exposure, and one of the most interesting publications in the age of Shakespeare. It survives in spite of its often pretentious pedantry, because it provides us with an insight into the beliefs and attitudes that understrutted the *ordinary* man of those times. The book was published in England for the first time in 1603, in the same year that Elizabeth died and James united the two kingdoms—in the same year, too, that saw the translation of the Chamberlain's Men to the greater dignity of The King's Men.

It has long been recognized that Shakespeare kept a very business-like eye on the tastes of his audience. Already pondering on new trends in play-making, he would have been soon aware of the importance of pleasing the new Court; and although James condemned magic of any sort, it was quite obvious that the topic had a

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Newes from Scotland, p. 17.

The Tempest, I. i. 56—57 (text from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. C. J. Sisson (London, Odhams, 1954).

morbid fascination for him. Sir John Harrington, a notable literary dilettante of those times, obtained an interview with the King in 1604. Among other things that they discussed was "those who by second sight had seen the bloody head of Mary Stuart dancing in the air before her execution". But what is more significant to the present purpose is the King's admission that "he had himself sometimes sought to find, out of *certain books, a way to tell the future; he named some dangerous volumes, and advised Sir John to avoid them.*"[8] It is clear that, however much he feared it, James was in fact fascinated by the possibilities of magic. Whatever else Shakespeare may have intended in *The Tempest*, he made sure of capturing the monarch's interest at the very beginning of the play; for James could hardly have witnessed the first scene without being considerably reminded of his *own* earlier experiences of the personal menace of bewitched elements. Had he not himself asserted that witches "can rayse storms and tempests in the aire, either upon Sea or land, though not vniuersally, but in such a particular place and prescribed bounds as God will permitte them so to trouble. . . ."[9]

It may be objected here that Prospero is certainly not a witch, for a witch, whether male or female, was engaged in magic for evil ends. Technically, he is a magician, practising White Magic because his ends are benign. But for all that, James, as Shakespeare's patron, had set his face, at least officially, against all forms of magic. The King had written . . . "the consulters, trusters in, ouer-seers, interteiners or sturrers vp of these craftes-folkes *are equally guiltie with themselues that are practisers.*"[10] As far as James was concerned, they all merited death and he would spare none, not even "bairnes".[11] Although, in view of what the King had confessed to Sir John Harrington, this ironically condemned the monarch out of his own mouth, Shakespeare had to disengage himself from any personal implication in the theme of the play, to disavow magic, before the play ended.

The most generally accepted interpretation of *The Tempest* is that offered by Professor J. Dover Wilson, which sees the play as Shakespeare's intentional farewell to the theatre. This concept was advanced in a paper read before The Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1936, and was published by the Society under the title *The Meaning of the Tempest* in the same year. Stimulating

[8]Williams, *James I*, p. 202.
[9]James I, *Daemonologie* (Bodley Head Quarto IX, 1924), p. 46.
[10]ibid., p. 78.
[11]ibid., p. 77, 78.

as the idea may be, and seductive in pleading as this great commentator always is, the contention rests on three passages in the play that need careful re-examination, before Wilson's interpretation can be accepted.

The first passage is "Our revels now are ended . . ." There is no evidence, except personal opinion, to show that this passage is the beginning of Shakespeare's valediction. The love of Miranda for Ferdinand, though an important and delightful theme, is by no means the most important one in the play. We have dallied a while with idyllic young love, we have been entertained by a masque; and at this stage Shakespeare hurries us forward. Other themes have to reach a climax; there is Caliban's insurrection to be dealt with, and the royal persons to be reconciled. This speech, then, has a very obvious dramatic function: it is a transition, especially *in mood*, from the idyllic benignity of the gods to irritating disquiets of Caliban. It is, as it were, a deliberate changing of the emotional gear, and nothing else.

The second passage, "Ye elves of hills . . ." yields more easily at first to Wilson's persuasion. But if we are to agree, we must first of all accept it that Prospero is Shakespeare, and secondly we must interpret the significance of a number of images as metaphors, so that the magic that Prospero abjures becomes the magic of Shakespeare's plays, the staff his pen and the book his script. Wilson is correct in sensing a valedictory atmosphere about this passage; but he does not see that the images upon which his interpretation rests are concrete and not metaphorical. Firstly, then, there is abjuration of the practice of magic itself. Through the magic persons of elves, Prospero has controlled (*a*) thunder, (*b*) earth-quake. Through them he has had power to raise the dead. James himself had contended that magicians could "rayse storms and tempestes in the aire"[12]. He asserts as well that they "can make spirites either to follow and trouble persones"[13]—an activity that must call to mind much of Ariel's activity. "What more," asks the King, "is the reste troubled of a dead bodie, when the Deuill carryes it out of the Graue to serve his turn for a space, nor when Witches takes it up and joyntes it, or when as Swine wortes vppe the graues?"[14] It is clear that this speech was not falling on uninformed ears. Not only was all this familar matter to the royal expert, it showed a flattering knowledge

[12]ibid., p. 46.
[13]ibid., p. 47.
[14]ibid., p. 59.

of Daemonologie, too. But there was another link: King and playwright alike read Ovid. Could James have listened to Prospero renouncing his magic without recalling Medea's equally moving incantation:

> Ye breezes and woods, ye mountains and streams and pools; all ye gods of the groves, all ye gods of the night, be with me now. With your help, when I have willed it, the streams have run back on their fountain heads, while the banks wondered; I lay the swollen, and stir up calm seas by my spell; I drive the clouds and bring on the clouds; the winds I dispel and summon; I break the jaws of serpents with my incantations; living rocks and oaks I root up from their own soil; I move forests, I bid the mountains shake, the earth to rumble and ghosts to come forth from their tombs.[15]

There is evidence, which every student of Shakespeare knows, that the poet knew and enjoyed the works of Ovid. Surely a considerable memory of the older poet lingers here. But the point to which we must return most emphatically is that all these considerations lead us to realize that Shakespeare was building up as clear and as concrete a picture of the activities of witchcraft or magic as he could. It was not a passage of metaphorical extravagance at all, but such a picture that learned and vulgar alike would know and recognize; a picture of a real magician. It had to be so and could not be otherwise; for Shakespeare, far from having any intention of renouncing his art, is about to make Prospero renounce the instruments of his magic. We can only see this as metaphor because we, unlike Shakespeare's audience, no longer give credence to sorcery. And how enticing it is to see in the book Shakespeare's great manuscripts, the very symbols of genius, and in Prospero's staff Shakespeare's own pen: how enticing, but how completely incorrect, since we can show that the book and staff were the accepted paraphernalia or instruments of the practising magician. "First possess his books," Caliban advises Stephano, "for without them / He's but a sot . . ."[16] Scot also emphasizes the importance of the magician's book when he remarks: "And further to adde credit to that art, these conjurers carry about at *this daie* bookes intituled under the names of Adam Abel, Tobie and Enoch, which Enoch they repute the most divine fellow in such matters."[17] Then, in *An Experiment with the Dead*

[15]Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VII (translated F. J. Miller).
[16]*The Tempest*, III. ii. 100—101.
[17]Reginald Scot, *The Discouerie of Witchcraft* (London, Booker, 1930), p. 262.

Scot describes how the 'maister' must take "*a hazel wand* in his right hand . . ."[18] To break his wand and to drown his book were *acts of renunciation of magic* and nothing else.

With all this in mind we can turn to the third passage upon which Wilson has rested his case—the Epilogue, for this but underlines the contention I have made. Prospero comes on to the stage for the last time. For the second time in the course of the play he has put off his magic garments; he is without wand or book, an ageing prince. As befits the speaker of an epilogue, he appeals, in a subtle *double entente*, for "breath of yours to fill my sails": for the applause of their hands and the approval of their hearts. In a final subtle touch he admits that, now lacking his magic power, he must rely on prayer, "which frees all faults". Prospero passes like "this insubstantial pageant"; but Shakespeare remains. What, in effect, he seems to say is this: "I have shown you magic. I know quite well that your Majesty disapproves of it, but I know that it interests you, and I have given you this play to entertain you. As Prospero assured you on my behalf, I know that prayer is a greater force than the power of magic. Your applause sets me free from suspicion of taint and assures me that the play has succeeded—as it was intended it should —in pleasing you too." As Professor Sisson remarks, "He (Shakespeare) was the last person, at the age of forty-seven, to wish to be 'set free', as Prospero pleads with the audience, from his happy industry as a dramatist."[19] It was Le Loyer who had remarked that "of all the common and familiar subjects of conversation . . . there is none so ready to hand none *so usual*, as that of Spirits. . . . It is the topic that people most readily discuss and on which they linger the longest. . . ."[20] With his usual business-like eye on what would please, Shakespeare gave his audience a play tangled with magic. But, before a royal audience, he had not the slightest intention of risking a charge—to quote the King himself—as "an interteiner or sturrer up of these craftes-folkes". So Prospero forswears his powers, and his creator, knowing kings, plays for safety. The tightrope of a fascinating, but dangerous, theme had successfully been walked.

Ten years after James's encounter with the witches, another event occurred that may throw further light on *The Tempest*. The King, accompanied by his court, had gone hunting in Fifeshire. In high

[18]ibid., p. 232.
[19]Shakespeare, *Works*, ed. Sisson, p. 2.
[20]*Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by night*, ed. J. D. Wilson and M. Yardley (The Shakespeare Association, 1929), p. ix—x.

secrecy, Alexander Ruthven, the Master of Gowrie, and the younger brother of the Earl of Gowrie, informed James of the discovery of a bag of foreign gold pieces. The King resisted his natural curiosity, continued the hunt, but afterwards went with some of his personal followers to Gowrie House. A hasty meal was improvised, and at length Alexander succeeded in drawing the King away to a tower room, whilst the elder brother, the earl, gave out that the King had ridden away. A cry of 'Treason' from the window in the tower led to the release of the King and the deaths of both the Gowries. The King's evidence, which was slightly suspect at the time, but which subsequent enquiry fully validated, was that in the tower he found an armed man, and that Alexander, having closed the door, threatened him. On protesting, he was told to hold his tongue, or he would die. One thing James never could do was to hold his tongue; so he once again protested, ending significantly: "albeit ye bereave me of my life, ye shall not be King of Scotland; for I have both sons and daughters." Alexander said he wanted neither his life nor his blood, but a promise; and went out to find the earl who was to tell the King what they desired. The man-at-arms was thoroughly frightened by this turn of events, and so it was that James was able to summon help. Alexander re-appeared, tried to bind the King, but found himself involved in a physical struggle he had not apparently expected. The earl entered and was prevented by James from drawing his sword, and when the rescuers burst in, James was vigorously screwing Alexander's neck. A moment later both traitors were dead. News spread to the town of Perth, and the King had difficulty in pacifying the irate townsmen, who flocked to Gowrie house to see what had happened to their popular earl.

The reader should bear in mind that witchcraft was no mere academic concern for James. It was a medium of treason that had involved, only a few years before, his nearest relation, the Earl of Bothwell. There are certain details to which attention must therefore be drawn.

(i) The minister at Perth said that he had met Gowrie in his house a few days before the incident, and had found him reading a book called *De Conjurionibus adversus Principes*—a pattern-book of rebellion. Nobody subsequently has been able to trace a book of this title, and various alternatives have been suggested.[21]

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[21]J. H. Burton, *History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1898), Vol. V, p. 333

(ii) According to Burton, the Scotch historian, the Ruthven family had "an evil reputation as dealers in black arts".[22]

(iii) When the earl's body was searched they found "a little close parchment bag full of magic characters and words of enchantment".[23]

(iv) A minister, preaching on the King's deliverance, described Gowrie as "an atheist, an incarnate devil, a studier of magic, a conjurer with devils, some of whom he had under his command".[24] In days of sycophancy and violent partisanship, this must be held slightly suspect; but it may well have reflected general belief.

(v) Some eight years later, certain letters between the Gowries and Logan, laird of Restalrig were found. Logan had a castle on a rock near the entrance of the Firth of Forth. In a letter written on 18 June he remarks, towards the end, "Use all expedition. Ye know that the king's hunting will be shortly, and then will be the best time."[25]

(vi) In a later letter another aspect of the plot was revealed. "I have concluded with Mr Alexander Ruthven how I think it will be metest to be conveyed *quietest in ane boat by sea.*"[26]

(vii) Again, "I durst be so bold as to entreat your lordship to come to see my own house where I have keeped *Lord Bothwell* in his greatest extremity."[27]

(viii) And finally, from yet another letter, "I think all matters shall be concluded at my house at Fast Castle; for I and Mr Alexander Ruthven concluded ye would come with him and his Lordship, and ane other man with you, being four in company intil ane of the great fishing boats by sea to my house, where ye shall land safely on Leith shore."

The evidence allows certain conclusions:

(*a*) The Gowries were indeed involved in treason. But they had not intended the immediate death of the King. It was the King's stout resistance that led to the unrehearsed tragedy in Gowrie House.

(*b*) The references to the boat and to the security of Fast Castle, suggest that the idea was to capture the King, and then to remove

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[22]ibid., p. 335.
[23]ibid., p. 335.
[24]ibid., p. 336.
[25]ibid., p. 348—349.
[26]ibid., p. 349.
[27]ibid., p. 349.

him by sea. Dozens of attempts were made to secure the person of James during his reign.

(*c*) James at first suspected an attempt on his life. His protest should be noted "albeit ye bereave me of my life, *ye shall not be King of Scotland.*"

(*d*) Members of the plot were connected with Bothwell. It would seem that the old menace was again rearing its head, had James but known it then. When Bothwell first resorted to witchcraft as a medium for treason, he had every right to look on himself as the royal heir, for James at that time had not married, and so had no issue.

I must clear myself of misapprehension now. My treatment of all the evidence is not to show that James was Prospero. I have refuted the suggestion that the latter was Shakespeare. One can hardly imagine a more inadvisable procedure than to portray the King, line by line, in a play obviously intended for the Court. I would not deny that many events in the life of James suggested dramatic treatment, nor, indeed, that there are not occasional flashes of portraiture. All I am suggesting is that, in playing before a monarch who believed he was a Divine King, who accepted himself as God's Vice-Regent, Shakespeare did not despise a number of oblique references that were certain to intrigue and interest the royal audience. There were, indeed, certain interesting parallels. Prospero was a reigning duke, James a reigning king. Prospero neglected his kingdom for books; he says himself:

> I thus neglecting wordly ends, all dedicate
> To closeness, and the bettering of my mind . . .
> . . . In my false brother awaked an evil nature . . .
> Me, poor man, my library
> Was dukedom large enough; of temporal royalties
> He thinks me now incapable.[28]

This was the common complaint about James, as the conversation he had with Sir John Harrington might remind us; "On their knees they (his ministers) prayed him to give more attention to public business."[29] "His inattention to business and his love of dissipation provoked remonstrances and complaints."[30] No king of England was so keen to impress with his scholarship and none wrote as many books as the pedantic James. Prospero was forcibly seized; so was

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[28]*The Tempest*, I. ii. 90ff.
[29]*The Historians' History of the World* (London, 1908), Vol. XIX, p. 481—482.
[30]ibid., p. 481—482.

James. Evidence shows that the conspirators intended to take James by sea, probably to Fast Castle. In Prospero's case, the plot succeeded: he was abandoned at sea. The little scene in which Prospero calls out hounds to hunt Caliban and his fellows must also have given singular pleasure to the King. His love of hunting and his affection for his dogs were well known. One dejected subject tied a note to the collar of one of the King's favourite hounds with this message: "Mr Jowles, we pray you speak to the king (for he hears you every day, and so doth he not us) that it will please his majestie to go back to London, or els the country wil be undoon."[31] "It was a little later that he took in his hand a paw of one (of his favourite hounds) named True Tell, and said, 'True Tell, I drink to thee above all my hounds, and would sooner trust thy tongue than either Craig or the bishop'."[32]—Craig was one of the Ministers and the bishop was Montgomery.

The Logan letters became public in 1608, a little time before *The Tempest* was written. Whilst it seems undeniable that Shakespeare allowed Prospero to have more than a hint of James in his make-up does the parallel end there? For after all, the Gowrie plot failed. At best, it suggested only a part of Prospero's story, it might be contended, and there its significance ceases. I can agree with the fact, but not with the conclusion, here. Surely the conspiracy leads to the very core of *The Tempest*'s meaning, if in a somewhat circuitous way. Prospero's tragic fault is his neglect of his primary duties as a ruler for the delights of his study. This directly leads to his incarceration on the lonely island, where he has to resolve the symbolic contradictions of Ariel and Caliban: a spiritual allegory whose unravelling the Elizabethans would have appreciated. *The Tempest* is a warning; for James had the same flaw of character. The fact that the King so nearly met Prospero's fate at Gowrie House would have given him food for thought. It might so easily have happened. There was so much in the King's character that was already disturbing his more thoughtful subjects. But who could dare to say it? Only an allegory created by a spirit as subtle and as powerful as Shakespeare could hope to succeed.

In case there is doubt whether Shakespeare was conversant with the Logan letters, an extract from one more of them will help to clear it. This time the author is writing to an unknown conspirator. "In case you and Mr Alexander Ruthven forgather, . . . for God's

[31]ibid., p. 482.
[32]Williams, *James I*, p. 59.

sake be wary of his reckless toys of Padua; for he told me the *strangest tales of ane nobleman of Padua that ever I heard in my life*, resembling *the like purpose*."[33] One wonders what was this Italian story that worried Logan so greatly, and which 'resembled the life purpose' of the conspirators. Has its disappearance resulted in the claim that *The Tempest* is the one play that can be regarded as Shakespeare's original? May one not conclude that Shakespeare knew it as well as he knew of the Gowrie Conspiracy, of the great Witch Trial of 1590, of Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* and the royal counterblast, *Daemonologie?* However that may be, this enquiry may provide a corrective to the kind of subjective criticism that proceeds more from speculation than from evidence; and it may offer, if any is needed, a fresh approach to this most delightful of plays.

[33]Burton, *History of Scotland*, V, p. 351—2.

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH THROUGH LITERATURE

(A Review of Professor W. H. Gardner's Report)[1]

ARNOLD LLOYD

MY own studies in English language and literature will appear to modern university teachers to be sadly dated, for I read under Ernest de Sélincourt and A. M. D. Hughes, both of blessed memory, just thirty-five years ago. I began studies in this field with two "love prejudices", as they might be called, for one of my mother's ancestors was 'Alcyon', Spenser's friend and patron, and, on my father's side, I was related to Wordsworth through the wife of the poet's brother, Christopher, who was Master of Trinity. De Sélincourt's teaching was built on a solid foundation, which included not only Spenser and Wordsworth, but also Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, as befitted so ardent a student of Wordsworth.

His course included, in addition, a thorough study of the Elizabethan dramatists, an initiation into the mysteries of the Metaphysicals and an analysis of Jane Austen. Undergraduates met once a week in groups of four to join in the tutor's criticism of a substantial essay by one of them, and in de Sélincourt's own seminar we traced the development of Wordworth's vocation as a poet, using successive editions of the *Lyrical Ballads* and the first and final versions of *The Prelude*.

Professor Gardner's report on the teaching of English is backed by his own long experience of teaching in grammar schools and universities. In his review of the use of literary texts in English teaching he has not been satisfied to rely on experience in England and South Africa, but has consulted teachers in France and Germany as well. He visited six secondary schools in England, two of them large grammar schools in London and four public schools, and he was able to consult, in all, a dozen or so specialist English masters. In addition, he reports discussions with the staff of a German gymnasium, and his enquiries at university level included Oxford and Cambridge where, with admirable impartiality, he consulted seven tutors in each place. At the newer English universities, he met some

[1] *The Teaching of English through Literature* (N.C.S.R. Report No. 9; p. 191; issued 1957.

two dozen lecturers, and he also visited two German universities and the Sorbonne.

The report opens with an introduction that sets the enquiry in the wider context of a discussion of the aims of English teaching, and is focused especially on a consideration of the function of what is called "practical criticism". After a brief reference to the need for a sound preparation in the primary school, Professor Gardner defines the work of the secondary school in this matter as being "to develop a sense of the basic literary and moral values—verisimilitude, order, moderation and harmony". It may be suggested, in passing, that this definition of the aim of English teaching at the secondary level might be used as the starting point for an illuminating symposium in a future number of this journal. To one brought up on Chaucer, Shakespeare and the Romantics, it suggests a preoccupation with rather chilly Palladian criteria, which may very well be good for the minds of secondary school pupils, but is unlikely to produce a warm, dynamic response in the emotions of lively adolescents in South Africa!

There follows a stimulating section on the need for "practical criticism" which is of particular interest to one educated in English literature before the rise of the newer orthodoxy inaugurated by Dr I. A. Richards's book of 1928. It is suggested that, at that time, those responsible for university courses in English were missing opportunities because they were concerned with "the passing on of second-hand historico-biographical knowledge and literary catch-words instead of getting students to read widely, intensely and critically in recent and contemporary literature". "Intensely", with its associations with violence, vehemence, and ardent emotion, is a word so non-Palladian and so contradictory of the moderation commended to secondary school pupils, that it must be a printer's error for "intensively".

It may be mentioned, in passing, by one who admittedly has had personal experience of only one of these unenlightened Honour Schools of English, that things were not really so bad as all that before "the Enlightenment". It is true that we were deprived, albeit through no fault of our own, of the help of Dr Leavis, who had not yet published his *magna opera*, but we did have the help of Coleridge's comments on the poetry of his friend Wordsworth, whose *Prelude* meant a great deal more to us because of our necessarily second-hand knowledge of his historical and biographical background. We read widely, "intensely", and critically over a great range of literature

and were not unmindful of the dangers of peeping and botanizing on a mother's grave. We were trained in a lively appreciation of the danger of accepting, without examination, any knowledge whether historico-biographical, or even critico-philological, and assumed, without having formulated a theory about it, that our concern must be to understand a poet's "communication", so far as was consistent both with our own inexperience, and with our own inadequacy as poets.

Professor Gardner's investigation was directed chiefly to discovering the relative merits of (*a*) a training in English which gives breadth of genuine knowledge and (*b*) a training which develops literary sensibility and independent critical judgement; he also wished to consider the further possibility of the dependence in part of (*b*) upon (*a*).

His research into the theory and practice of English teaching oversea included a survey of the syllabuses and examinations at secondary school and university levels, an investigation of the co-ordination of the teaching at these levels and an assessment of the relative value of oral discussion plus tests, and written exercises and tests in teaching critical appreciation. He examined especially the use of tutorial classes, seminars and reading groups, and the techniques of *lecture expliquée* and *explication de texte*. He also looked for help in assessing the value of creative writing as a means of developing critical sensibility. By the use in England and on the Continent of certain written tests designed for South African undergraduates he was able to compare standards of ability and achievement.

The report opens with detailed suggestions about the content of basic training in the lower and middle forms of high schools, in the course of which the theory and practice of the better teachers is summarized. There are paragraphs about reading aloud, oral composition, written composition, formal grammar, précis writing, and the comprehension and appreciation of prose and poetry. It is suggested that the French teaching technique of *lecture expliquée*, with the emphasis on an analysis and explanation by the pupil for the benefit of the rest of the class, should be used more extensively in English schools. There follow sections on paraphrasing and memorizing, on "creative" writing and choral speaking, and this part closes with an account of the usefulness of drama in schools.

The next part deals with the transition from school to university. It should be made available to all senior high school teachers

of English in South Africa, for it would help them to appreciate and to fill up the deficiencies which prevent South African high school pupils from reaching a standard comparable with that of England. In order to understand Professor Gardner's argument in this part of the report, it must be explained that in English high schools, prospective university students are tested in public examinations at 15+ or 16, and again two years later, and that the latter, the "advanced level" and scholarship examinations, which are used as university entrance examinations, go far beyond anything contemplated in South African high schools. It may be mentioned, in passing, that all senior teachers of English in high schools in England are graduates with honours in English.

Teachers of English preparing candidates for university entrance in South Africa will read with envy of the incentives and the examinations available to boys and girls in England. The university entrant must normally gain a distinction in one of the three subjects he offers at advanced level, but if he can reach the scholarship level, he is assured of at least £200 a year while he remains a student. The intellectual aristocracy write the five papers in English of the Oxford and Cambridge Board, a series of tests lasting for thirteen hours, but are not considered for a coveted State scholarship unless they have passed two subjects at scholarship level, and a further one at advanced level.

This part of the report is concluded with several sections on recommended methods of teaching English literature in high schools, and there is some discussion, in passing, of the use of dictated notes.

Professor Gardner's next section on the teaching of English as a foreign language reports, in some detail, the teaching methods used in France and Germany, and suggests that South Africans may profitably study the example of these countries, where a high standard of spoken English is reached in secondary schools. The importance of English teaching by the "direct method" is emphasized and the example of French teachers in this respect is earnestly recommended. At the end of this part of the report Professor Gardner summarizes his observations, recommending especially greater attention to the quality of teachers trained for high school English, an insistence on an active interest in and sympathy with English life and thought, and a training in the techniques of the "direct method" and of "*explication de texte*".

The heart of the investigation will be found in the second chapter

of the report. The remedying of defects in high school teaching depends on better academic work in university departments, and more expert professional training in post-graduate diploma courses; for until the universities raise their standards in both respects, English will be taught inefficiently. After a detailed review of the theory and practice of literary study in South African universities, Professor Gardner states the principles he took with him on his tour of investigation in Europe. He affirms his faith in regular tutorial work, in a yearly examination in "practical criticism", in the place of "textual" questions as a test of the quality of the student's mind, and in the continuing usefulness of the much-abused lecture method of teaching.

A summary of a paper by Dr Leavis on the idea of university English opens this central section of the report. If Dr Leavis is right in his contention that ability to read French easily, and a knowledge of Latin, are necessary to sound reading and criticism in English, many South African students of English would appear to be debarred. Some of his *obiter dicta* seem to me to betray an under-valuing of history that would disqualify a student in any other field of human studies. Is it really true, for example, that "the best criticism is recent", or that standards "must be related to the contemporary world"? Incidentally, it may be suggested that the misuse of the word "contemporary" by supporters of textual criticism serves to summarize the difference of opinion that divides them from other students of English. "Contemporary" means "occurring at the same time, of the same period", and does not mean "of the present, or of recent times". Indeed, discussion would be clarified if we reverted to the eighteenth century usage, and wrote "co-temporary". An illustration may perhaps be permitted here. *Paradise Lost* was created in the seventeenth century and, unless one can read it in its contemporary setting, understanding what it meant to Milton and his friends, one has not begun to appreciate it. It is really an impertinence to write as if our "contemporary sensibility" to *Paradise Lost* can be trained on "the poem in itself".

Professor Gardner reports a paper by Miss Daunt on "The Language Side of English in a University", and supports her view that an understanding of language, from the earliest times, is necessary to an understanding of literature, and that students who appreciate the best poetry written since 1500 regard the effort needed to learn Old English as amply rewarded by the pleasure of reading *The Wanderer* and other poems, and by the insight thereby

gained into the rhythm and diction of Pound, Hopkins, Eliot and Auden.

South African teachers are reminded that students reading for a degree in English at the University of London are required to have secured a pass in one classical and one modern foreign language in the General Certificate of Education, and must have passed a test in translation from English into those languages. Most such students have read French for at least five and usually for seven years, and Latin from five to six years. Professor Gardner takes the view that, until Latin and French are revived in South Africa, the status of English as an honours subject for the B.A. degree will not be equal to that of its counterpart in England.

Considerable space is given to the School of English Studies at the University of Nottingham, where Old English and philological studies are not in favour. The aim there is to provide a liberal education for non-specialists, such as schoolmasters, civil servants and business administrators. There follows some account of the differences between the Oxford and other types of examination, and of the place of "special essays", written during the year, in part fulfilment of examination requirements.

The attitude of members of different universities to practical criticism is then reported at some length. It is clear that several experienced Cambridge men do not agree with Dr Leavis in this matter. As one of them said:

> Practical criticism is useful only when it is part of the study of a poet in relation to his work, life and period *as a whole*. A good poem is *not* autonomous: it must be seen in relation to its background. Hence the study of history, the classics and literary fashions is still necessary.

Enthusiasts for practical criticism should reflect on the evidence of three very experienced university teachers of English, with first hand knowledge of the results of Dr Leavis's analytical method and exclusively critical standards, that they produce

> the kind of student who thinks it superior to like very little who is too ready to condemn. . . . Such an attitude tends to inhibit the creative impulse.

Professor Gardner gives some sixteen pages to reports on tutorial methods of teaching. He recommends tutorial groups of six to eight students to provide regular practice in discussion, frequent individual tutorials for the private analysis of errors and shortcomings, and a greater use of complete works, and of broad trea

ments of authors, periods or movements as subjects for discussion. The seminar room at the University of Nottingham is described in some detail, because it is worth copying elsewhere. It seats about fifty students at long tables, has book cases for the departmental library, a rack for periodicals, pictures to illustrate the social history of different periods, and a radio gramophone for speech and music. During the day and until 4 p.m. it is a silent reading-room for honours and post-graduate students; but thereafter it is used for discussions. This part of the report is concluded by a summary of the main requisites of a good examination in English.

The third part of the report provides an interesting introduction to the teaching of English literature in France and Germany. South African university authorities should consider adopting the new probationary year instituted recently in France to help to bridge the gap between school and university. Students spend part of their time at the university and part at the *lycée*, and the year's work enables the university to select those students most likely to profit by the courses leading to the *licence*, and helps promising students to choose courses wisely when reading for their degree. Those who are interested especially in raising the standard of accomplishment in high schools, will read with interest the sections on the competitive qualification, the *agrégation*, the compulsory qualification for a post in a *lycée*. In this connexion the report in Chapter III of the scores attained by English grammar schoolboys in English literature papers originally set in the University of Natal, serve to show the gap between the standards of the two countries.

Professor Gardner's conclusions and recommendations call for serious thought by all South African teachers responsible for teaching English. He suggests that the proper qualification for a departmental head in a high school is at least a B.A. honours degree, and he recommends that, for the work of supervision and organization, the senior specialist should receive a responsibility allowance. It is quite clear that he regards an M.A. or a doctorate as a desirable qualification for departmental heads.

Among the interesting suggestions about school syllabuses are the following three: that précis-writing should be restored, that more attention should be given to oral exercises, and that the French technique of *explication de texte* should be introduced experimentally. The standard of literary questions set in South African matriculation examinations appears to be quite unworthy of comparison with that of the English "ordinary" level examination taken at 15+ and, as

a means of raising the standard of university entrance, Professor Gardner suggests that South Africa should follow the English system in separating the school-leaving from the genuine "matriculation", i.e. university entrance examination.

University teachers of English Literature are advised at some length. Professor Gardner favours a broad course on the history of the English language, with a study of the best Middle English writers; but he is anxious that modern English literature shall not be sacrificed in the interests of an excessive programme of linguistics. He favours a broad historical study of a certain number of complete prescribed works. He thinks that formal lecturing still fulfils a need, but would supplement it with tutorial teaching in small groups. He stresses the value of essay-type questions, but pleads for the inclusion of textual questions as a test of thorough reading. He favours practical criticism and gives details of the tests he would use.

In conclusion, Professor Gardner suggests that the Union government's department of Education can best help by encouraging individual initiative and experiment. He thinks that many suitable candidates for a university training are excluded by their parents' poverty, while many affluent undergraduates, with third-class matriculation certificates, are "battening on public funds to little advantage". It is suggested that faculties deserve more liberal financial support, as a means of delivering them from dependence on a large number of students of poor quality.

In his final paragraph Professor Gardner emphasizes the importance of beautiful surroundings, and expresses the hope that more money will be made available for the improvement and upkeep of university buildings.

Professor Gardner's stimulating report causes this reviewer to reflect on the slowness of progress in the teaching of English literature over the last fifty years. He was trained in English at his preparatory school by a scholarly woman who graduated with honours in English at Aberystwyth about the turn of the century, and was put through his paces at a public school by another honours graduate of the same university. Thereafter he was trained by two leading members of the Oxford school of English. Every one of Professor Gardner's suggestions was a matter of common practice with us thirty-five years ago, and we enjoyed practical criticism before Dr Leavis had been heard of. One is reminded of a quotation from André Gide which was long ago placed by Dr I. A. Richards at the head of his chapter on "The Analysis of a Poem":

> Toutes choses sont dites déjà, mais comme personne n'écoute, il faut toujours recommencer.

It is a pleasure to be able to support Professor Gardner's recommendations, and to report that they not only work in practice, but ensure a lifetime of alert and critical reading.

READERS' FORUM

ENGLISH SCHOLARSHIP: A transmutation of species.

To the Editor,
English Studies in Africa.

Dear Sir,

I read your editorial with much interest and found it admirable. One small correction I might make: Q was not the first holder of the English Chair at Cambridge; A. W. Verrall was appointed in 1911 but died in June 1912, and it was after that that Lloyd George offered the chair to Q. You'll be interested to know that I was in Cambridge the other day and found Grierson very cheerful and well, sitting up at his table writing a letter to his eldest daughter, at the moment in Kenya with one of his grandsons—but then, he's only 93!

J. DOVER WILSON.

Three Beaches,
Balerno,
MIDLOTHIAN.
22 April, 1958.

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TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

Dear Sir,

I am reluctant to disagree with Professor Davis on *Troilus and Cressida:* his essay seems to me so right on many values of the play; and so fine—after the critical equivocations and triviality of some recent comments I have read—in the passionate conviction of its response. All the same, I believe that the play means something different, and something more.

Professor Davis says that "Hector's fall, if it can be attributed to anything in Hector, may be set down as the penalty he had to pay for an excess of virtue: excessive courage, literally that, not rashness; excessive honourableness, literally that, not over-trustfulness; excessive magnaminity, neither vanity nor pride." And he claims that

Troilus has done nothing to deserve his fate: "a cruel fate descend(s) on two fine men who have done nothing to deserve it." Now this is not so. The poignancy of the play lies deeper. The ignoble Achilles and Cressida survive and thrive, because they are paltry. Hector dies, Troilus suffers, because what was merely despicable in others is tragic in them. Professor Davis describes Achilles as "the Greek who values his own honour above that of the whole Grecian army"; but Hector prizes *his* honour even more dearly. In the teeth of his own better knowledge, he prefers it to the moral law that he himself declares to be greater. Both Hector and Troilus are flawed. Fine men though they are, both transgress against the moral law that gives the play its central meaning, and by so doing bring about their own tragic fate.

The action and the meaning of the play are brought to a single focus in Act I, Scene 3. I cannot here go into the complexity of the great debate between Agamemnon and Ulysses. It is, of course, the eternal debate between predestination and free will. Agamemnon regards man as the plaything of the gods, Ulysses believes that man is the master of his fate, and the two views so presented haunt us through the whole ensuing action, interpreting and shaping it. The point I am after at the moment, however, lies in the special twist that Ulysses gives to the argument: man may be free but, he argues, in using his freedom wisely man will choose obedience. The universe has laws, and man may disobey them, but only to his harm. It is, as Professor Davis remarks: "a speech on discipline", and its dramatic function is "to impose this discipline . . . on the . . . generals". That is its local dramatic function; but it has a second and more important, if less immediate, dramatic function. It presents a standard of discipline by which all the characters are judged. The important lines are these:

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark what discord follows: . . . .
> Force should be right, or rather, right and wrong,
> (Between whose endless jar, Justice resides)
> Should lose their names, and so should Justice too.
> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite,
> And appetite . . . .
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And last, eat up himself . . . .

These lines are recalled through and through the play, from Hector's

> But value dwells not in particular will,

to Thersites's

> what's become of the wenching rogues? I think they have swallowed one another. I would laugh at that miracle—yet, in a sort, lechery eats itself.

To forsake the moral law, which is true reason, means that men can follow only their own appetites for guide, and must destroy themselves; and both honour and love, made ends in themselves, are merely appetite:

> still wars and lechery, nothing else holds fashion.

Troilus and Hector are betrayed and defeated not because they lack common sense, not because they are too trusting, and not even because of the world's corruption. They fail because of their own lack of balance, of self-discipline. A complete reading of the play will show the element of corruption in Troilus's love: the self-destructive extreme of sensual appetite. Imagine Romeo, or Hamlet, to whom Professor Davis likens Troilus, saying anything like this:

> Th' imaginary relish is so sweet,
> That it enchants my sense: what will it be
> When that the watery palates taste indeed
> Love's thrice repured nectar? Death I fear me
> Sounding destruction, or some joy too fine . . . .
> . . . . And I do fear besides,
> That I shall lose distinction in my joys . . . .

The "honour" of Hector (and of Troilus too) is not as "immaculate" as Professor Davis maintains. The element of corruption in it emerges undeniably from the other great debate in the play, Act II, Scene 2. In agreeing to carry on the war, both Hector and Troilus defy the universal order: they put the lesser law before the greater, they obey will and appetite rather than what they know to be right. Hector's speech closely parallels what Ulysses had said:

> The reasons you allege, do more conduce
> To the hot passion of distemper'd blood,
> Than to make up a free determination
> 'Twixt right and wrong . . . .
> . . . . . Nature craves
> All dues be render'd to their owners: now
> What nearer debt in all humanity,
> Than wife is to the husband? if this law
> Of Nature be corrupted through affection,

And that great minds of partial indulgence,
To their benumbed wills resist the same,
There is a Law in each well-order'd Nation,
To curb those raging appetites that are
Most disobedient and refractory.
If Helen then be wife to Sparta's King
(As it is known she is) these Moral Laws
Of Nature, and of Nation, speak aloud
To have her back return'd. Thus to persist
In doing wrong, extenuates not wrong,
But makes it much more heavy . . . .

This is unanswerable; and suddenly, at this very point, Hector surrenders:

. . . . Hector's opinion
Is this in way of truth; yet ne'er the less,
My spritely brethren, I propend to you
In resolution to keep Helen still;
For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence,
Upon our joint and several dignities.

Why does Hector so strangely turn about? This is surely the crux of the play, and Professor Davis fails to consider it. From this moment Hector is doomed. His honour is hollow, unreal: it is the emblem of pure self-will, chosen inexplicably and irrationally against Law and against Truth. That is why at the end Hector must die for his honour, despite the warnings of prudence, despite the pleas of love.

F. H. LANGMAN.

University of the Witwatersrand,
21 May, 1958.

* * *

THE WEIRD SISTERS IN MACBETH

Dear Sir,

Some comments need to be made on Dr M. D. W. Jeffreys's article *The Weird Sisters in Macbeth* in Vol. I, No. 1 of *English Studies in Africa*. Those that I make below would come more appropriately

from a Social or Cultural Anthropologist, and I offer them with a deep sense of my lack of qualifications for the task. But the inaccuracies in the article cannot be allowed to pass as undisputed facts.

Few readers, I suppose, would dispute Dr Jeffreys's contention that "there are no such persons as witches, *qua* witches, in *Macbeth*, but instead, there are composite figures combining the attributes of witches, sorceresses and the Erinyes." But the argument by which he seeks to support this assertion rests mainly on his account of witchcraft; and this account, as applied to witchcraft in Western Europe, is consistently inaccurate in detail and in sum.

Dr Jeffreys tells us that "the aim of the night-roving witch is the annihilation of some person well known to, and intimate with, the witch. Hence witches cannot bring about by witchcraft the death of strangers." Later, "Kings, royalty and the priesthood are magically too well protected, too powerful magically, to be within the reach of witches and their mundane crafts and practices." The witches of North Berwick in 1590 were evidently unaware of these disqualifications when they tried to bring about the death of King James VI by witchcraft*. Admittedly they failed; perhaps for the reasons given by Dr Jeffreys, perhaps for the reason given by their leader ("the Devil", as the recorder calls him)—that James was "un homme de Dieu"; but both James and the witches—and so presumably the general contemporary opinion—agreed that there had been some prospect of success. If any further evidence were needed, we might consider Holinshed's account (which Shakespeare probably knew, as it occurs only a few pages before the history of Macbeth in the *Chronicles of Scotland*) of the execution of several noblemen for conspiring to kill King Duff by witchcraft.

The testimony of the North Berwick witches alone, however, very concisely and conveniently contradicts nearly all Dr Jeffreys's generalizations about witches. For example, "Sorcery achieves its ends by employing means to that end, whereas in the case of witchcraft no means are employed; it is solely the evil power inherent in the witch that brings about the death of her victim." But the North Berwick witches, in order to raise a storm at sea while the King was sailing home from Denmark, did employ means; namely, a cat which they threw into the sea while the leader said, "Ye shall sink the ship;" and when that failed, they met again and melted a waxe

*Records of the trials are in Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials* (4 vols., 1830—33); lon extracts are quoted in M. A. Murray's *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*.

image after each had held it and pronounced the words: "This is King James the Sixth, ordered to be consumed at the instance of a nobleman, Francis Earl Bothwell." These activities conform with Dr Jeffreys's account of magic *as opposed to* witchcraft: "There must be a performer, a rite, a substance and an incantation or spell or the use of words of power." Such a distinction between witchcraft and magic (or sorcery) was not recognized by witches, by the law or by the general public in Western Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Witches generally seem to have practised magic; and the magic I have described above resulted in the trial of the practitioners on a charge of witchcraft.

As for Dr Jeffreys's assertion that witches kill by devouring their victim's soul (how, in practice, does one set about this?)—I have heard of no instance of it in Western Europe. This, of course, does not mean that it was never done; I am no authority on witches. But I am sure that such cases, if they existed, were rare; and Dr Jeffreys's confident assertion that such was the invariable method is not in accordance with the evidence.

"A witch," says Dr Jeffreys, "may now be defined as the cannibal of the spirit world. This definition, as will be seen, nowise fits the three weird sisters."—Nor does it anywise fit English and Scottish witches. There is every reason to prefer—as did those who had the practical task of eradicating witchcraft in England by legal processes —Lord Coke's definition of a witch as "a person who has conference with the Devil to take counsel or to do some act."

For good measure Dr Jeffreys adds to his other arguments—any one of which would be conclusive if it were valid—the fact that "Three is a number that is anathema to witches, and we have the three weird sisters chanting:

> Thrice to thine and thrice to mine
> And thrice again to make up nine."

So, the argument runs, they cannot have been witches. Yet at one of the meetings of the North Berwick witches, for the purpose of causing the death of James VI, "the Devil" assembled three covens of witches and selected nine (three times three) whom he "thought most meet to do the turn for which they were convened".

I do not know what conclusion the reader is supposed to draw from the quotations from Davenant (whose "improvements" on Shakespeare do *not* dispose me to "suppose that he knew what Shakespeare meant" in any important respect), for they are ostensibly introduced in order to establish a distinction between witches and

other beings, while what they appear to do is to equate witches with fairies, weirds and wizards.

Dr Jeffreys's use of the present tense in referring to witches suggests that he is thinking of some part of the world where witchcraft, or something that anthropologists now call witchcraft, still flourishes and still has the power to kill. He is not talking about witches in Shakespeare's England, or in Holinshed's Scotland.

It might be relevant to a study of *Macbeth* if an anthropologist could throw some light on these earlier, Western European forms of witchcraft. But the literary critic and the common reader cannot expect to find a flood of new light coming from sources outside the text of the play. The weird sisters in Macbeth are unique in kind, and are sufficiently defined in and by the play itself.

R. T. JONES

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg,
13 May, 1958.

* * *

Dr JEFFREYS replies as follows:

Mary Kingsley (*West African Studies*, 1901, p. 175) wrote: "Witches you will find from Sierra Leone to Cameroons, but they are extra prevalent in the Gold Coast and Calabar. Their traps are usually pots containing something attractive to the soul."

I arrived in Calabar in February 1915 as an Assistant District Commissioner. Then, as a committing magistrate and later as a trial judge, I dealt continuously for the next thirty years with cases involving accusations of witchcraft. In the first three months of 1919 I committed for trial 27 murder cases arising out of deaths by ordeal over witchcraft accusations. Eighteen people were then hanged in public in the Oron market square.

After retiring from the British Colonial Service I lectured for eleven years at the University of the Witwatersrand on witchcraft. A curious repercussion ensued. In 1948 there was published in Antwerp, a book, *Ku Poli de Wildernis in*, by Ellen Gati, the explorer. On Page 232 she writes: "Het is niet overal bekend, maar aan de Universiteit van Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, een van de mees moderne Universiteiten der wereld, bestaat een leerstoel voo

toverkracht, en toverdokters verkrijgen officiële toelating om hun beroep in Zuid-Afrika uit te oefenen."

My researches into witchcraft show that there is no difference between African witchcraft and European; neither was invented locally, both draw from some common source. One instance must suffice. In *King James I. Daemonology in forme of a Dialogue*, 1597: *Newes from Scotland* 1591, Bodley Head, quarto, 1924, p. 39-40, Philomathes describing the beliefs held about witches says: "And some sayeth, that their bodies lying stil as in an extasy, their spirits wil be ravished out of their bodies, & carried to such places. And for verefying thereof, will give evident tokens, as wel by witnesses that have seene their body lying senseles in the meane time, as by naming persons, whom with they mette, and giving tokens quhat purpose was amongst them, whome otherwaies they could not have knowen: for this forme of journeing, they affirme to vse most, when they are transported from one Countrie to another." In this account of the witch's mode of transport in Britain one sees that the body of the witch is left senseless while the soul of the witch roams around. Compare this description of a European witch with that given by H. P. Junod (*Bantu Heritage*, Johannesburg, 1938, p. 116) which runs as follows: "The Bantu believe that some individuals, in addition to their power of 'possession' have the power of magically unsheathing themselves' during the night, their spirits going out to torment, kill or eat magically other people. This is called witchcraft. . . . His spirit goes out of his body as he sleeps, but his body still lives and he re-enters it."

The following tabulation, drawn from lecture notes to students, shows how clear is the parallel between African and European witchcraft:

African	*European*
A belief	A belief
Deals with souls	Deals with souls
Souls destroyed	Souls lost
Operates at night	Operates at night
Adherents meet secretly	Adherents meet secretly
Aims at death	Aims at death
Witches fly through the air	Witches fly through the air
Dominated by hate and malice	Dominated by hate and malice
Innate	Transmitted, mother to daughter
Familiars, bats, owls, hyenas	Familiars, bats, owls, wolves

	African	*European*
11	Practitioners mainly women	Practitioners mainly women
12	Witch's fire	Witch's fire
13	Trial by ordeal	Trial by ordeal
14	Detected by witchdoctors who are social benefactors	Exorcised by priests who are thus social benefactors
15	Witches often burnt to destroy the soul	Witches burnt, probably for the same reason

There are other parallels such as unsheathing the soul at night, but there is sufficient evidence here to show that witchcraft is the same wherever found. It is not found among the aborigines of the New World.

It is thus clear that, unlike Mr Jones, I have both practical and theoretical knowledge of witchcraft, a somewhat unique experience.

In the English language there are the two words, *witchcraft* and *sorcery*. The first is connected with Anglo-Saxon *wicce* (witch), *wiccian* (to fascinate*), and the second, with the Latin root, *sors*, a lot (to cast lots). These two words are not synonymous. Mr Jones must now make up his mind as to the meaning each word had in Shakespeare's time, or coin definitions of these two words and see if his definitions fit the text. It is quite clear that the multitudes were in Shakespeare's day confused over the meaning of these two words; hence all the more need to clear away this confusion. Mr Jones merely adds to the confusion.

The so-called witches in North Berwick are not in reality witches. Merely to call Mr Jones, 'a heathen Chinee', does not make him one. By their fruits ye shall know them. On this test the alleged witches of North Berwick used a substance, a cat, and words of power, or a spell. These two uses place them in the category of sorcerers, and no witches; and I have not, *pace* Mr Jones, been inaccurate at all.

The act of assembling three covens of sorcerers and choosing nine, supports my contention that these witches of North Berwick were not what they were loosely called. I dealt with this fallacy in my article where I said that Paul, realizing that witches in Scotland did not conform with the pattern of witches, tried to circumvent the difficulty by calling them Scottish witches.

Mr Jones's statement that a distinction between magic and witch

*The meanings given to these Anglo-Saxon words by the O.E.D. are more comprehensive, and show that the restricted (and probably more accurate) meaning given by Dr Jeffreys is of later historical development. [Ed.]

craft was not recognized in Western Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries is inaccurate. In King James's *Daemonology* a distinction is drawn between Moses's and Pharaoh's magicians and witches. Christ's pointing at the barren figtree and cursing it was an act of magic not of witchcraft.

Holinshed's account of the execution of several noblemen for conspiring to kill King Duff by witchcraft shows also that these noblemen were practising sorcery, and not witchcraft.

Mr Jones states that I have been inaccurate in detail and in sum, but has still to demonstrate where.

The fact that there is no basic difference between present African witchcraft and past European witchcraft induced me to write in the present tense of witchcraft in Shakespeare's day.

Mr Jones states that no illumination comes from sources outside the text of the play. Well, whence will it come? Not from pursuing the text of play, nor in the study of *minutiae*, but only by bringing to bear on the play new knowledge and new views revealed by cultural anthropology.

Mr Jones could with great benefit read *Witchcraft among the Azande*, by Evans-Pritchard, and the chapter on witchcraft in Meeks's *Sudanese Kingdom*, where soul eating is discussed.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

THE DIARIES OF JOHN RUSKIN. Vol. 2, 1848-1873. Selected and edited by Joan Evans and J. H. Whitehouse. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 70s.

DESPITE much modern depreciation of Ruskin, the interest he still arouses is clearly revealed by the numerous recent volumes dealing with his life and work. The latest is the second volume of his journals, covering the period that was perhaps the saddest of Ruskin's life, not excepting those final years of nervous breakdown and mental decay. The opening year is that of his unfortunate marriage to Effie Gray, terminated, after six years of unhappiness for both, by the annulment of the marriage in July 1854 and soon followed by Effie's marriage to Ruskin's friend and protégé, the painter, Millais.

Depression, with hard work and Continental travel as ineffective antidotes, is henceforward the prevailing condition of Ruskin's life, until four years later he met a child of ten, Rose la Touche, with whom he quickly fell in love. On her seventeenth birthday, in 1866, Ruskin proposed marriage to her, and agreed to wait two years for her answer. Henceforth the friendship with Rose became an increasing trial and misery for both. Rose lapsed into hysteria and nervous breakdown, neither definitely refusing nor accepting Ruskin's renewed offers of marriage: while Ruskin himself degenerated into an obsessional melancholic, depressed by anxiety about Rose and his own loss of Christian beliefs, one of the causes of Rose's hesitations. So the years passed amidst increasing emotional and mental crises and illnesses for both the ageing man and the young girl, until her mental breakdown and death in 1875.

Yet, externally, Ruskin's life during these years was in strange contrast to his inner desolation. His various writings, the completion of *Modern Painters*, and of *The Stones of Venice*, all raised his reputation amongst his contemporaries, until in 1869 he was elected to the newly founded Slade Professorship of Art at Oxford. In September 1872 Ruskin took possession of his future permanent home, Brantwood, at Coniston, where we still see him as the volume closes, preparing his lectures, often in sadness, solitude and anxiety and with occasional premonitions of his own not-distant mental decline.

Despite the disappointing fact that nearly all the most intimate and revealing pages of these *Diaries* have been removed and presumably destroyed, much that remains illuminates Ruskin's temperament and personality. Upon every page lies the impress of an essentially aesthetic nature. His love of the physical beauty of Nature is a transcendent passion, a supreme delight in joy, an almost unfailing consolation in misery. Not less was his love of language. In the combination of both these passions in endless, emotional, detailed descriptions of the beauties of Nature, he found his greatest happiness. To this, the earlier pages of this volume ove rwhelmingly testify. But as the anxieties following his marriage and his love for Rose la Touche develop, such descriptions gradually fade into silence or brief notes.

As with Wordsworth, Ruskin's love of Nature leads him ultimately to interest in humanity, which in turn leads to an examination of economic theory and to condemnation of it as inhuman.

Work, overwork indeed, was Ruskin's chief refuge from disappointment and anxiety. Every page of the diary reveals how excessive and exhausting were both his mental and physical energy. His intelligence, his intellectual curiosity are never satisfied, and enter into all fields and details of his experience. His studies include botany, geology, mineralogy, crystallography and kindred sciences; the arts, including architecture, claim even greater attention. Almost inevitably, with such widespread demands upon his time and attention, Ruskin remained but a gifted amateur in all. Overstrain in such conditions naturally developed, and we are not surprised to find such entries in the diary as this, made at Montanvert in August 1849: "I rose this morning almost in the dark, as fresh as a lark, and came in this evening utterly exhausted." Towards the close of the volume such entries grow more sinister. "So dark that I can hardly see to write this at seven o'clock. But great sense of darkness in my own brains, literally and spiritually—therefore perhaps intellectually also," he writes in his new home, Brantwood, on 25 September 1873. That was almost a quarter of a century since he had also written in the diary: "Disease of the brain: observe in No. 7 Dr Winslow's Journal of Psychological Medicine, Essay on Softening of the Brain."

Indeed, with so many pages missing, perhaps the chief value of this volume is the clear light it throws upon Ruskin's mental decay. In the later years he observes and describes his besetting nightmares with a vividness of detail such as he had previously

devoted to descriptions of Nature. To the psychiatrist, Ruskin's malady stands clearly revealed in the twenty or thirty dreams that so alarmed and disgusted him, nightmares crowded with stock Freudian symbols.

In this diary, too, Ruskin asserts his basic aesthetic principles, so remote from those of our abstractionists and tachists of to-day, in which he conceives art as the expression of a rich personality, man as an offspring of the human and the divine, a combination of mind and soul. "I felt that the human soul was all—the subject nothing," he writes; and again, "I felt in this walk, being somewhat tired, very forcibly again how much the power of Nature depends upon the quantity of mind which one could give to her." In the Louvre in 1854 he discovered that "Truth was an absolute measure of the goodness of art, that the greatest men were always those who gave most truth." It was also after a visit to the Louvre, five years before, that he gave the clearest and most comprehensive expression to these ideas: "It is vain," he wrote, "to talk of a man's being a great or a little Painter: there is no Greatness of Manhood too vast to be expressed by it, no meanness nor vileness too little or too foul to be arrested by it; and what the man is, such is his picture—not the achievement of an ill or well-practised art, but the magnificent or miserable record of divine or decrepit mind."

OSWALD DOUGHTY

* * *

WORDSWORTH'S PREFACE TO THE LYRICAL BALLADS

Anglistica Vol. IX. W. J. B. Owen. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1957. 204p. 20 Kr. (£1 0s. 10d.)

Dr W. J. B. Owen has satisfied a real need by this edition of Wordsworth's famous preface. The work contains an analytical introduction, closely argued but sympathetic, full textual apparatus and explanatory and historical notes. The text is printed from the 1850 edition. Perhaps the most valuable part of Dr Owen's work is his analysis of the variations between the 1800 and the 1802 editions of the preface.

H. Littledale, in his edition of *Lyrical Ballads* 1798 (Oxford, 1911), was the first editor to make generally known and available the variant texts. He did not comment on the variations, but he noted that "By comparing Wordsworth's various prefaces and critical

essays we shall see how he stated and amplified from time to time the general grounds of his poetical convictions." The opportunity for doing this had been denied to readers of Nowell C. Smith's collection, *Wordsworth's Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 1905), which printed the 1850 text of the preface, though giving the impression that it printed the 1800 version, and although Professor E. de Sélincourt's great edition, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* Vol. II (Oxford, 1944), lists all the variants (not entirely accurately), the attention of readers is not drawn to their significance. The matter is hardly one of indifference. Many apparent confusions in Wordsworth's thought can be understood when we realize that the usually printed text is not a single essay, but an original text considerably augmented at a later date. Even Professor René Wellek's essay on Wordsworth, in *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950 The Romantic Age* (1955), seems unjust to Wordsworth when, in the discussion of rustic speech (p. 133-134), passages from the first version and passages added in 1802 are quoted side by side.

Dr Owen's work undertakes, for the first time, to analyse the various levels of the preface. The text printed in 1802 does not merely add detail to the original version: its additions represent a somewhat different method of critical approach. His study makes us aware of how essential it is to bear in mind always the facts of publication. It also gives us a better opinion of Wordsworth's consistency as a critic.

The original version of the preface, printed in 1800, was primarily concerned to defend the particular rhetoric of the ballads. It discussed the question of rustic speech, and the possibility of attaining a permanency in language through the selection and imitation of the 'language of men'. The 1802 version, with its lengthy insertion on the definition of the poet, is concerned more with problems of expression—with the 'real language of nature' and the 'language of passion'. Selection, considered in 1800 the basic action of the poet, is now, to a certain extent, moving into the background. The poet's concern to use the 'language of passion' will in any case enforce a preliminary selection on him. The attack on figures of speech and the stress on the language of prose may also be modified. The differences may not be sufficient to contradict each other, but they make a certain amount of retrenchment necessary in 1802. The difference in intention between, for example, "in these Poems I propose to myself to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the

very language of men," and, "while he is only selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is treading upon safe ground," is to be appreciated when we realize that the first quotation is from 1800 and the second from 1802.

The reader of the late version may be left a little uneasy. The 1802 preface has a curious duality of approach, and its *caveats* must reduce its total force. It might have been better for Wordsworth to have rewritten the whole thing. Possibly his boredom with the preface, expressed in 1830, may account for his attempt to transmute by parenthesis:

> The preface which I wrote long ago to my own Poems I was put upon to write by the urgent entreaties of a friend, and heartily regret I ever had anything to do with it; though I do not reckon the principles then advanced to be erroneous.

One might be tempted to print, like Littledale, the 1800 text as at least a complete and, as far as it goes, a satisfying unity, in spite of Wordsworth's known opinions of editing:

> You know what importance I attach to following strictly the last Copy of the text of an Author.

But this would be to neglect the duty of the commentator. The subtlety and relevance of the parentheses is undeniable, and in the circumstances Wordsworth has done a remarkable job of soldering.

Dr Owen's close analysis of the texts solves many of our difficulties. His interpretations, developed from detailed study, sometimes in the vein of the logical positivist, and his knowledge of the background of critical history, are uniformly helpful. Particularly stimulating are his discussion of Wordsworth's views on metre and his account of Wordsworth's theory of the production of a poem. Dr Owen does not limit himself to the criticism: he analyses the time-lag in several poems and is thus able to relate the theory and the practice. Similarly, when discussing the principle of selection, he demonstrates, from comparisons between the texts of the poem *Repentance* and Dorothy Wordsworth's account of the original incident, how far Wordsworth's action of selecting is in reality one of augmentation and poeticization.

The notes to this edition amply show Wordsworth's indebtedness to the critical tradition. Wordsworth's imagination, we have been recently told in South Africa, was not bookish. This may be so but his criticism was far from being unlearned.

The preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* is complex, and Dr Owen's

work does not make easy reading. It is, however, a book which demands and deserves close attention from students of literary criticism.

RICHARD MORTON

* * *

WRITERS AND THEIR WORK, 85, *Dante Gabriel Rosetti.* Oswald Doughty. London: Longmans Green, 1957. 32 p. port. 2s. 0d.

WRITERS AND THEIR WORK, 92, *Horace Walpole.* Hugh Honour. London: Longmans Green, 1957. 44 p. port. 2s. 0d.

These two recent additions to the British Council's series of pamphlets on English writers give us an opportunity to comment on the series as a whole. The pamphlets tell the non-professional reader the significant details of a writer's work and exemplify, with quotations, the major aspects of his work. A book-list suggests materials for further study. The pamphlets must come within the range of thirty to forty pages and sell for two shillings. In these days of high-fidelity scholarship, genteel biographical and critical essays, in the manner of Austin Dobson's vignettes, are rare and should be welcomed. The pamphlets certainly cannot provide exhaustive studies, and the authors must select their materials with care. If they can write with Dobson's concise elegance, so much the better. The star-studded list of contributors to the series is assurance that the work will be well done, as is the distinguished presence, as general editor, of Professor Bonamy Dobrée.

But the biographical essay, at a length between a D.N.B. article and a full-scale study, raises many problems. The dictionary writer may merely summarize his facts (with *q.v.* as a frequently possible safety-outlet). The writer of a book can accumulate his evidence and detail his point of view. The writer of the essay, however, must not only state the main facts—he is obliged, if only for fluent narrative, to offer some interpretation of them. Much of his evidence will be squeezed out, and his interpretations may appear as a series of epigrammatic pronouncements. The epigram represents in brief the scholar's conclusions, but how useful is it to the uninitiated? "The retiring, bookish Thomas Gray", "the witty, worldly George

Selwyn", "the feckless Richard Bentley": such phrases are the historians' shorthand. They may show the writer's affiliations (as for example when used by their most brilliant exponent, Professor Trevor-Roper), and, if witty, they may perhaps suggest a new outlook and approach. But I doubt if they are of much help to the non-professional reader. The second example quoted above, for instance, might even cause a spontaneous mental association between Selwyn and, say, Sidney Smith—obviously a critical disaster.

Professor Doughty's majestic life of Rossetti, *A Victorian Romantic* (1949), had some seven hundred pages. His nine page treatment of Rossetti's life in the pamphlet is smoothly done, but he is forced to commit himself, and denied room to present his evidence. To someone who knows about Rossetti, the method is suggestive and stimulating. To the newcomer, the apparent over-simplification may be confusing. Robert Buchanan was, no doubt, a vicious rogue, but it is surely misleading, though not unjust, to dismiss him as a "jealous journalist" (p. 12). The treatment of the "fleshly school of poetry" business in the pamphlet suggests a Rossetti defenceless and unaided. "The dart had entered deeply and drawn blood:" Professor Doughty's interpretation is certainly true, but the reader, not knowing of Rossetti's own reply to Buchanan and his plentiful support, may only be confirmed in the "greenery-yallery" heresy.

Mr Hugh Honour avoids producing a biographical sketch of Horace Walpole, the events of whose life are indeed of little significance, but essential information must therefore be scattered inconveniently throughout the pamphlet.

A few biographical details and a telling phrase of praise or blame for some writer's private life tend to stimulate interest in the man far more than a few quotations and comments do in the poetry. One suspects that the tendency of these pamphlets could be to turn the reader to the gossipy biography rather than to the collected works. A non-committal, unadorned thumb-nail sketch, such as those which Miss Helen Gardner includes in her recent anthology, *The Metaphysical Poets*, would, I believe, be quite adequate, and would leave room for so much extra critical comment and illustration.

The critical parts of these pamphlets are doubtless the most useful. Professor Doughty discusses the literary influences on Rossetti, his concern with the mystery of human existence, and his "regenerative rapture" in *The House of Life*, with the perception with which he has so enriched Rossetti studies of late. Necessarily

the criticism in these pamphlets will leave many points untouched, and it is right that it should do so. The reviewer, of course, has licence to ask for more than enough, and we wish that Professor Doughty could have found space to tell us more about what he has elsewhere called Rossetti's "decorative, detailed poetic imagery" in which " 'Body's Beauty' is often more evident . . . than 'Soul's Beauty' ". Rossetti's sensitivity, for instance, to epidermal sensations of heat or dampness will doubtless strike the reader, who may suspect the existence indeed of a "fleshly school of poetry".

Mr Honour describes the complex landscape of Walpole's works with great dash. Most of us have moments when Horace Walpole seems a kind of literary Milo doing spiritual push-ups before breakfast. The indomitable bounce which he shares with Boswell and Lord Chesterfield (and which is ideally symbolized by his appalling nickname 'Horry') can be overwhelming in these pallid days. But he shares with Boswell and Lord Chesterfield also the hypnotic powers of garrulity: the decision to throw his book out of the window is always overcome by the desire to see what he is up to on the next page. All anti-Walpole feelings must sooner or later be overcome by the learned enthusiasm of his great and gracious editor, Mr Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis, and Mr Honour's pleasantly written pamphlet, with its just stress on Walpole's variety and "exquisite harmony", makes our capitulation easier.

The true Walpolian is austere: while he rightly directs us to the correspondence, he is not disposed to have much truck with the works published during Walpole's life. From the days of Dr Nathan Drake, *The Mysterious Mother* has been out of favour (Mr Honour quotes Byron's not unexpected praise, however), but we wish that Mr Honour had been kinder to that grand old Gothic scamper, *The Castle of Otranto*. Surely the work is a masterpiece. The ironic fastidiousness of the language establishes a safety-rope between writer and reader, but it is hardly necessary. The solid good sense of the characters—when told that there is something horrid in the bedroom they go and look, when danger threatens they flee (and in the right direction moreover), when benighted they behave with the utmost competence—and the excellent dialogue—Manfred's monologue at dinner to the speechless knights is brilliantly done, and Matilda's and Isabella's prying-match over Theodore could hardly be bettered—make it a novel to be reckoned with by any standards. It would be difficult to find another work in which characters and narration so clearly manifest the supposedly typical virtues of the

eighteenth century, while the framework is in a convention epitomising the so-called worst folly of the age. The tension is clearly felt and impressively handled. Walpole has in fact realized and solved the Gothic problem: we do not believe in Mrs Radcliffe's castles or Lewis's monk, because the witnesses are such evident idiots. People in *The Castle of Otranto* are different:

> "Alas!" said the stranger, "what can I do to assist you? I will die in your defence; but I am unacquainted with the castle, and want——"
>
> "Oh!" said Isabella, hastily interrupting him, "help me but to find a trap-door that must be hereabout . . . ."

Trap-door first and sentiments second! Our faith is restored by the hasty interruption. But Mr Honour will have little to do with such considerations. Sir Walter Scott's sensible and sympathetic comments on *The Castle of Otranto* remain, I believe, the best account of the novel.

A disturbing feature of these pamphlets is the lack of references. The general reader is not afraid of footnotes (at least the new *Pelican Guide to English Literature* does not think so), which are essential when describing and quoting from the works of a prolific writer. Sometimes, too, the lack of secondary sources is a handicap. We are told by Mr Honour that Sir Lewis Namier has something to say about Walpole's political activities, and that Sir Kenneth Clark has commented on Strawberry Hill. Our appetites are roused by snippets of quotation. To locate the passages (they are, for the interested, L. B. Namier, *Avenues of History* (1952), p. 118 and K. Clark, *The Gothic Revival* (2nd ed. 1950, p. 60) is surely the duty of the author rather than the reader.

Some small points in Mr Honour's pamphlet merit attention. When, in a note to page thirty-two, he epitomizes a letter from Walpole to Chatterton, April 1769, as "avuncular" the reader may be pardoned for assuming that the text of the letter exists. This is not the case (see *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis Vol. XVI, 1951, p. 112). On page forty-four, "K. K. Mehrota" should read "K. K. Mehrotra". In the rubric of the book the dat of Walpole's death is given as 1791, instead of 1797.

The proof-reading in Professor Doughty's pamphlet is unfortu nately lax too, there being, for instance, four minor faults in th passage quoted from *My Sister's Sleep* (p. 15-16), while th omission of the comma before "love" in the second stanza of *Th Birth-Bond* (p. 21) seriously mars the sense.

Such errors are to be deplored, particularly as these pamphlets are clearly meant to be ambassadors from the scholarly world to the general reader.

RICHARD MORTON.

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Compiled by Miss M. Farmer, Gubbins Librarian, University of The Witwatersrand (by courtesy of the University Librarian).

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Contributors

Mr N. H. Brettell	Headmaster, Riversdale School, District Salisbury, S. Rhodesia. Author of *Bronze Frieze; poems mostly Rhodesian.*
Dr J. A. Colmer	Keble College, Oxford; Senior Lecturer in English, University of Khartoum.
Professor John R. Doyle Jnr.	Professor of English, The Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina, U.S.A.
Professor W. H. Gardner ...	Professor of English Language and Literature, University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein.
Mr M. Goldman	Columbia University and Clare College, Cambridge.
Mr A. D. Hall	Senior Lecturer in English, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
Mr J. Hennelly	Broadlands Boys' High School, Meyerton, Transvaal.
Professor R. G. Howarth ...	Head of the Department of English, University of Cape Town.
Dr M. D. W. Jeffreys	Honorary Research Associate, Cultural Anthropology, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
Mr R. T. Jones	Lecturer in English, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
Dr Uys Krige	Author, Poet and Critic, Cape Town.
Mr F. H. Langman	Lecturer in English, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
Prof. W. A. de G. Lloyd ...	Head of the Department of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
Mr R. E. Morton	Lecturer in English, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
Professor O. Doughty	Sometime Professor of English Literature, University of Cape Town.
Mr Brian W. Rose	Lecturer in Education, College of Education, Johannesburg.
Professor M. Versfeld	Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Cape Town.
Professor J. Dover Wilson ...	Editor of the New Cambridge Shakespeare.

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